



Paul H. Pellon

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THRESHOLDS

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BY

FAITH BALDWIN

Author of "Magic and Mary Rose,"
"Those Difficult Years,"
etc., etc.



BOSTON
SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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Printed in the United States of America

THE MURRAY PRINTING COMPANY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
THE BOSTON BOOKBINDING COMPANY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

To
VIRGINIA AND CHARLES FRANKLIN

THRESHOLDS

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CHAPTER I

WHEN the youngest of her three children was born, Ethel Marlowe died. She hadn't particularly wanted the baby. The next in line was seven years old and Mrs. Marlowe had felt, she said, cheerfully, that the new one was in the nature of an after-thought. "Epilogue," she added thoughtfully.

She hadn't complained—that wasn't her nature. She went through with it gallantly, if wearily, and lived long enough to hear her nurse's optimistic and professional announcement, "a beautiful little girl ——" Long enough to murmur, dimly, but with a faint flare of the delicately fatalistic irony so essentially her own, regarding a hand she was powerless to lift from the sheet, "—as I said, Dick, it's the last——" And, at her husband's broken exclamation, pity lighted her little face, but the tired voice said gaily, "I've always been right, my dear—but it seems that, this time, I must pay for it." Then she had died, her broad white lids closing, with a tired flutter, as of wings, over the indomitable, elusive eyes that, in eleven years of marriage had possessed the power to draw Dick Marlowe—*back*.

She died. The baby lived. The baby was called Jane, Marlowe remembering Ethel's wish, uttered some months before the child's birth.

"Jane, if it's a girl, Dick. Plain names for our children. I was born in the Violet-Gladys-Edith-Gwendolyn era. Fancy the handicap! It dates one so! Moreover, frilly names for undecorative children are a curse. Think of long legs and large feet with Grace on its visiting card! If she's pretty, our Jane, so much the better. If she isn't, her name won't draw undue attention to her deficiencies."

The boy, ten years old at the time of his mother's death, was Richard Wynne Marlowe, Jr. and had always been called Wynne. The older girl, seven, was Anne. Now, after the lapse of years, came Jane.

For the first year of her life a stiffly starched trained nurse presided over her little destinies of formulas, teething, short-coating and English perambulator airings. After that came a Welsh nurse-maid known as Nanna. It had been suggested to the baby's father that one of his numerous spinster cousins or his wife's widowed sister be taken into his household to mother all three children, and this advice was repudiated by him with lazy horror.

"They'll do very well, as it is. I won't give them a half-mother. They're too intelligent, I hope, to be appealed to by makeshifts. I prefer some one hireable—and fireable. Relations, especially poor

ones, which are the only ones I possess, are too sensitive. I wish a thick-skinned wage earner who knows how to take orders, to bring up my children."

Some one made feeble remarks on a rising inflection. Words pierced through the dull absorption with which Dick Marlowe's loss had surrounded him.

"Habits? Grammar——?"

"My dear, good Louise, they are bound to form habits—mostly bad ones. It's the nature of the beast. Ethel herself couldn't have prevented that. As far as grammar is concerned, I doubt if their immediate circle will be that of the purist—speaking in a social, or any other sense. I knew something of Greek and Latin before I was eight and my father, as befitted a professor of English, spent most of his time running after my sentences with corrective, verbal, manicure scissors. Much good—or harm—it did me! Today, I may split an infinitive with ease, or use a double negative with *sang froid*, and still remain a member of my clubs."

Thus the bereaved husband to a group of well-wishers. By nature and profession a materialist, he believed that the gay sword-and-flame life that had been Ethel's was perished with her bright body, that nothing remained of her save that which no sane lover's mind dwells upon. He did not comfort himself with the wistful and gentle fancy that they

would some day be reunited in a distant Eden. He had known his wife for twelve years, loved her for twelve, been married to her for eleven. That, he reasoned, was as much happiness as dare fall to the lot of any man. Faithful to her in the technical sense he had not been—not while she lived. It was unlikely that he would be after her death. Her eyes might still draw him—they did so, in the white and feverish nights after her going—but they could not draw him back to that which was no longer.

People expected him to remarry shortly. Since he was amazingly attractive, amazingly clever, comparatively young, an assiduous, generous spender of a large, earned income, it was the foregone conclusion of those who sat in club lounges, who leaned across Ritz tea-tables, who yawned across country on the way to Palm Beach or in parlor cars destined for Southampton, that “Poor old Dick won’t stay single long.”

He considered this possibility himself, while Jane was still a bubble-blowing infant, lying in her perambulator, making offended faces at finger-poking, clucking passers-by. The old statement that a doctor needs a wife left him unstirred by its logic. He was not struggling at the beginnings of a practice. He was, indeed, the most notable of the gynecologists in New York City, probably in the East, possibly in the country. Certainly the most adver-

tised. Nor was there need for a clever woman to assist him socially. His position—he had been born to it. It was assured to him. As for the love of a woman in his bitter, charming life—he had had many loves and one Love. That was sufficient for him. He said to his close friends when they spoke of Ethel, with their undimmed regret at her swift passing, “Thank God none of the children look like her!” And his friends understood.

Tall she had been, Ethel Marlowe, slender as a young tree. Dark, with the warm pallor of Southern women and great eyes which were a heritage from a remote Spanish ancestress. And she had had a red mouth, deeply nicked at the curling corners, an inquisitive but patrician nose, marvellous hands—Sargent had painted them, lying idle, but powerful, in a chiffon lap—and a quick, glancing wit, like the dart of dragon flies—blue and silver—over stirring waters.

She had loved her children. But she was in love with her husband. All her brief history is written there. Her children’s comfort had been her concern, their manners, their physical welfare. Further she had not gone. She had not had time, had not had strength. All of her was concentrated on holding Dick Marlowe with the lightest, strongest chain she could forge of her lovely body, her charm, her brilliancy and understanding. All of her was en-

grossed in calling him back, whimsically and unrepentantly, from his occasional expeditions into far forests of illegal enchantment. She was forever "keeping up with" Dick. He loved cards—she became the most expert bridge player in their circle; he loathed dancing and she forgot that once she had danced as lightly as a reed in a whispering wind; he adored beautiful clothes on beautiful women—half her days were spent at her dressmaker's. He was always restless—and so on his rare vacations they travelled—without the children.

There had always been good nurses.

She looked strong, she was steel-and-elastic. But she grew very tired. Her death in childbirth must be written down as one of those unforeseen "things which happens." Ethel herself would have said that nothing ever happens. Agnes Spencer, her closest, indeed, her only, intimate woman friend said of her, on hearing of her death, that she'd "let go." And added, to herself, "before it was too late." What she might have meant by that a few could have guessed. She was weary, was Ethel Marlowe, of alluring; weary of being the silken, scented cushion under a man's head; weary of waiting for the return of the prodigal—the many returns. She set her love as a candle in the windows of his soul's house and kept it burning in wind and weather. Now she had gone, the candle was—to physical eyes

—burned out—the house empty. She couldn't have kept it up forever, you see. One day she must have lost. And so she had died, to make her claim eternal.

This is not her story. She was dead before it opens, but something of her colored the lives of her children. It is the story of the third child, Jane.

Jane was an uninteresting baby. She was pretty with the good-baby beauty of infants on the covers of ladies' magazines. She had no ailments other than the usual discomforts of infancy and grew fat on formulas. She made no astonishing mental progress and performed no acrobatic physical feats. Wynne had stood erect on his own small legs at nine months, had never crept, had walked at ten, had abjured baby talk. His first word, uttered in a tone of weary scorn, had been "Rats!" Anne, at three, had been able to read; at six she was devouring the newspapers, and was a child possessed of a quaint, elfin loveliness, a blonde of shell pink, spun gold and faint silver. But Jane was merely a baby, with no personality beyond the plump, gurgling, rosy personality of healthy infancy. She had large, staring blue eyes and hair that curled and was distinctly auburn. She was late in walking, after months of rolling; she was very backward in speech. And when she did talk it was upon the most material of subjects, such as food and dolls and bedtime. Not

so Anne, whose earliest conversation had consisted of mystic dialogues held with unseen companions; not so Wynne who spoke, as an authority, on art from the age of four and who, even earlier, had produced works in crayon, much resembling, his father said, the Italian Primitives in treatment and color.

There was nothing remarkable about Jane, save her good health, her unfailing good nature, her unextraordinary, if extreme, prettiness. She grew up, if anything, handsomer than her blond Viking of a brother, her frail enchantress of a sister. But mentally and temperamentally, she was the Ugly Duckling of the family.

"I think she's stupid!" Anne announced dispassionately when she was ten and Jane was three. Anne had been reading poetry to her small sister who, sprawling, fat tummy downward, upon the floor, built a shaky house of blocks and turned an unhearing ear to the heartbreak of great words and great rhythm. "I think she's an idiot!" remarked Wynne, as indifferently, when Jane, at six, had failed to see the artistic value of his pen and ink sketch, "Three Women", and had merely seized upon it with shouts of delight in possible paper dolls. "I'm sure she'll be a credit to me!" her father said, without rancor and without pleasure, when Jane, at eight, interrupted him in the middle of his most entertaining story, in order to correct a point. She had heard

the story before, unembellished. Inaccuracy wounded her. She was painfully exact. She was also unvaryingly truthful. She had no comprehension of, or sympathy with, her sister's legends, her brother's evasions, her father's social prevarications. Her black was very black, her white a pristine absence of color. The rest of them might see mauve and gray. Not Jane. This was a trait she had from her mother, although Ethel had been forced to modify its exercise. The rest of them had escaped the perilous inheritance.

A curious childhood, lonely in an unconscious, spiritual sense; much comraded physically, not by the brother and sister so alienatingly her elders, but by the little boys and girls of the pleasant Gramercy Park neighborhood; a childhood spent in correct, clever schools; a childhood that slipped late into girlhood and fitted quietly into the little life of the boarding school to which, at fourteen, she was sent. Jane was very popular in school. She was a passable student, good enough to be able to indulge in athletics without warnings from her teachers, but not too good to antagonize the other girls. And so pretty! Physical attraction makes for school-popularity and that she had. She was also a happy person, lacking humor but with a sense of the slapstick and farce. She liked people; she liked people to like her. The four years at the boarding school slipped

by with the occasional breaks of vacations—vacations which meant lunch at the Ritz or Sherry's, matinées, a small dance and then back again to tell about it, which constitutes two-thirds the pleasure.

And then, amazingly, it seemed to her, she had come home, she was eighteen, her début was to be in the autumn. Her brother Wynne, back from several years in Paris, was twenty-eight, and Anne, the survivor of three broken engagements—two of them announced—was five and twenty.

Jane hadn't seen much of either of them. For the boy, college, travel, art school; for the older girl, Palm Beach with her father or relatives, Europe with a chaperon, visits, a continual round of them. As for Dick Marlowe, when he was working he worked too hard to be at home; when he played he did not play in Gramercy Park. Jane, arriving from school in the heat of a late spring day, was met by a car and a chauffeur, and viewed, on entering the house, her family for once assembled to greet her. She thought, dazed, to herself, "It's time I got to know them!"

High time, and yet it took her ten years to accomplish it.

It was, appropriately, the tea-hour. The long, narrow room with the cream, panelled walls, the great graystone fireplace, the Sargent portrait of Ethel and one very fine Corot, the lounges and easy

chairs, the black glass bowls filled with violets and daffodils, had an air of permanency. It was a room of excellent, if catholic, taste; a room self-assured, without arrogance; a room that offered relaxation both mental and physical. Jane looked about her with a sense of curiosity. It occurred to her that now she might be allowed to know this room. She had had in it, as it were, only the status of a visitor. As a child she had been ushered into it, importantly, by a capped nurse; as a girl she had been as uncertain as a caller, a background merely to the glitter of her sister and brother. Now she was home. School was out—forever. This room would become her room, a pleasantly furnished space wherein she might entertain her own friends. The small music room which adjoined it and had been the battlefield of her unwilling and untalented performances on a patient Steinway, appealed to her much less, perhaps because of its unhappy associations. Yet it was an unusual, delightful room, fantastic and octagonal, recently redecorated in sealing-wax red and a curious clear green, under the direction of Anne, who had a flair for odd color combinations which always turned out well.

The family was there. Dr. Marlowe, tired after a long consultation in the morning and an operation from which he had just come, lay full length on a divan, from which he rose to kiss her, and on which

he again relapsed with a visible letting down, mental and muscular. Anne was erect in a large, graceful needle-point chair. She wore a straight black velvet frock, round at the throat, girdled in synthetically tarnished gold. Antique gold earrings dropped from the lobes of small, exposed ears to her shoulders, ornaments which repeated the more vivid tones of the silver and gold hair wound like a cap about her little head, smooth and shining, low on the forehead. Her mouth was rouged a hectic magenta; her startlingly blue eyes were dark pools in a pale and intense face. She wore no rings, but about one beautiful ankle a dull gold snake bit, petulantly, his jeweled tail, and called the attention unnecessarily to the perfect foot, strapped into a low-heeled, black velvet pump and resting on a needle-point footstool.

Wynne stood, his broad back to the fireplace, and twisted the points of a fair mustache, worn after the British toothbrush fashion. There was nothing in his short, blond hair, in his fine physique or in the meticulously conventional cut of his clothes to suggest the Latin Quarter. He had an outdoor look about him, a look of the country club, the scarlet jacket, the links. But his face, in its sensitive moulding, the lines of a mouth too handsome for a man, the too pointed chin, was a dreamer's face, eager and passionate, yet skeptical of the merit of his dreams. He came forward to Jane and kissed

her, Continental fashion, on both her round cheeks, holding her off at arm's length after he had done so, and regarding her gravely. Anne, who had already greeted her sister, watched the little scene with a languid interest.

"Upon my word—the Very Flapper! Infant," said Wynne, "you are hopelessly, helplessly good-looking!"

Dr. Marlowe, who looked very much like his children and at the same time tremendously like himself, contemplated the smoke of his cigarette.

"Don't turn her head. Other girls' brothers will do it for you. She looks healthy at any rate," he commented dispassionately.

Jane loosened the unnecessary bit of sable at her full white throat and cast it and her close little hat on a table. She crossed to her father and made room for herself on the long mulberry velvet couch.

"I *am* healthy—Aren't you glad to see me, Daddy?"

He answered, slipping his clever surgeon's hand over her own in a brief caress:

"I am. Must you call me Daddy? I don't remember that you ever so transgressed before. It sounds like a greeting card."

Jane puzzled. She was very literal.

"Greeting card? I don't see—Why, no," she

said honestly, "I don't suppose I ever did. Father, I used to call you. But all the girls at school——"

"Spare us," Anne suggested, fitting a cigarette into a slim black holder patterned in little diamonds. "We've dropped the father, Wynne and I. We decided he looks too young. Too frivolous. It puts us at a disadvantage to be forced to acknowledge parental authority every time we address him. So for months he has been just—Dick."

"Jane won't care for that," Wynne remarked, still lounging against the mantelpiece. "She'll think it disrespectful."

Jane looked over at him.

"Why, no, not exactly. But I'd rather call you Father, if you don't mind," she said, turning to Marlowe with a trace of anxiety in her tone that was very formal and quaint. Marlowe laughed.

"Not at all. Suit yourself, *mon enfant*. There's Barker with the tea. Anne, pour for us—if you're not feeling too lily-languid."

There was a little edge to his voice. Anne raised her eyebrows and shot him a swift, rather wicked smile. She and her father were always at swords' points. Or rather at the buttons on the foils. They understood one another. They enjoyed the skirmishes. They had none of the illusions usual in their relationship.

Anne went to the tea table with her curious light

step. Jane, watching her sister's long hands, with their rose-stained finger tips, move deftly among the old, happily colored cups, was conscious of a great admiration and a greater envy. To be so assured! To have such an insolence of self-possession! To look, at twenty-five, like a fragile, sophisticated eighteen, and yet an eighteen wistfully reminiscent of young trees in May, wide reaches of moon-dyed water, gardens at dawn.

Barker passed the cups and the sandwiches. Dr. Marlowe drank his tea with a sigh of satisfaction.

"I am become an old woman," he announced, with mock ruefulness. "After years of total abstaining I am a tea fiend, a tippler of Orange Pekoe, a drunkard of the worst type."

Wynne waved aside his proffered cup. "Whiskey and soda, if it's all the same to you," he said, and was presently equipped with a tall glass, amber lights without and within, and the tinkle, as he shook it, of miniature bergs of ice.

"Now," said Jane, her startling appetite momentarily appeased by sandwiches of pâté—of hot-house cucumbers—of peach conserve. "Now — yum! aren't these *divine*! Tell me the news, some one!"

There was a silence. Her family looked at her with the faintly amazed respect visitors at the Zoo give to an unknown specimen of animal. Anne spoke.

"News! My dear Jane! Nothing is new. Events merely repeat themselves, with variations. Dick is being pursued by a rich widow. She's a G. P., more demonstratively G than P, I should judge. Wynne is half in love with a blonde from Brooklyn. She 'went to' Erasmus. Her father is in the coal business. Wynne met her at a charity shindig at the Plaza. Twice a week he takes the car—always on evenings when it is necessary to my comfort to have it—and rolls over the Manhattan Bridge to consult with her on the habits of rubber plants. I myself am not engaged. It is a lost feeling."

Jane broke in with a gasp:

"Oh, poor Lionel——"

Anne looked ultraserene.

"Poor, indeed. That was the main difficulty. To continue—in the spring of next year I am to have a play produced by Hunter; around Christmas—I shall have a book of verse on the glutted market. We will summer at Easthampton, as usual. In the fall, you shall make your début. It is the united opinion of the Family that you had best marry in your first season. You're not the type that hangs on gracefully. We have three possibilities in view. You must marry, Jane. Wynne and I are so damned expensive. Your début will be like the last rocket at a yacht club Fourth of July. Dick

is tired of organ recitals in a mahogany and hand-blocked chintz office. He wants to retire and travel. He wants to go to Thibet—he desires to consult a llama. And we mustn't be obstacles. Wynne will go back to Paris, I shall take an apartment in the Village, we'll sell this ancient ark of respectability and you—you must be prepared to face the world from the shelter of a Park Avenue apartment, two closed cars, and an opera box on alternate Mondays. *Voilà!*"

"Have a shot," Wynne suggested kindly, "you must be dry——"

Jane turned a bewildered gaze on her father, who smiled and patted her shoulder.

"It is true, my dear. Your parent's eyelids are a little weary. I am tired of women and their ailments. Anne is quite old enough, and, I may add, wise enough to shift for herself. Wynne belongs in Paris and you must be safely placed. I—I am very anxious to get away," he said, in a lower tone, and Jane saw, under the habitual light manner, a certain dark anxiety, a restlessness which distressed her. She was not sensitive to another's mood; she was not even very intuitive, but this thing was so marked that she recognized it. Also, she had a store of schoolgirl sentimentality—a sentimentality that only in an older, forgotten generation survived marriage and childbirth and progress

—a fluidity of surface emotion that brought the facile tears to her eyes.

She murmured something and was silent, not listening to the exchange of banter between her brother and sister. Marlowe was silent also. He watched Jane, but his thoughts were not with her. Women — damn them — the grind — the hospital scents and sounds. "*Ethel, Ethel, if only you had not left me!*"

Jane contemplated her future. The thought of a Park Avenue apartment and an impeccably dressed, delightful husband presented no distasteful elements. She felt a tiny flutter at her heart—wedding gifts and the Voice that Breathed, orange blossoms and orchids, the scented, moving crush of the reception, the contrast of creamy satin and stainless tulle with red hair and a radiant skin—a honeymoon at Hot Springs, if the time were seasonable. It appealed to her, the picture. She and Fan Smith, her roommate from Detroit, had often discussed this important, inevitable event. There had been necessary bridegrooms in the offing and marital strings of pearls. In Fan's case the morning coat and striped trousers clothed the form of a young sprig, now in Princeton, the recent annexation of a prom. In Jane's, face and figure remained pleasantly nebulous. She admired her father's and Wynne's blond good looks, but dark men—those slim, sleek,

moving picture heroes. Weren't they—well, more exciting? Jealous? She thought so. So far her fancy had been captured by a dozen sprightly youths, but it wavered easily from one to the next. Her diary, faithfully kept, attested to this fact.

Babies. She liked babies. She was thinking of them now, cherubs, rosy and smiling, with blue eyes, dimpled limbs and no colic, when Anne said:

"I'm out for dinner. You, too, Wynne? Dick, you'll have to dine in stately splendor with the Young Graduate. Jane, it's time you went to your room. I hope you'll like it. I have had it done over for you, since Easter. You'll have to share a maid with me. I still have that dreadful Francine, but she'll do for us both. We can't run to two."

She lazed from the room, Wynne followed shortly, and Jane was alone with her father.

"Is she really having a play? And a book! How wonderful! But I didn't know a thing about it. She didn't give me a chance to congratulate her. I do wish I had known."

"I was equally ignorant until recently," Marlowe answered. "It is not a new development, however. Anne has always dabbled her pretty fingers in the passionate purple of poesy. I haven't been honored with a glimpse of either manuscript. I hope to God they're not too terrible, as she is using her own name."

He eyed his younger daughter's grave, slightly downcast countenance. A very youthful smile erased, for a moment, the tired lines in his attractive face.

"You're impressed? Don't be. It matters so little, the forced flowering of these little, greedy, imitative talents," he murmured.

She did not understand him. She was not even listening intelligently. She was wishing that Anne, in her infrequent letters, had mentioned these laurels. It would have—what had been Father's half-heard term—impressed?—yes, impressed the other girls. "My sister, the authoress," "my sister, the poetess," "my sister, the playwright." She had already worked Wynne, "my brother, the painter," a trifle overtime. She sighed impatiently. How stupid she was! She felt like a small gray sparrow in a cage of colored parakeets.

After a moment she went on up to her room. Anne, dressing for dinner, slipped from the patient hands of Francine and came in. Their rooms were separated by a great tiled bathroom. Anne, in a wisp of a pink chiffon shift said, indicating Jane's quarters:

"You like it?"

She did like it, very much. She went from object to object with little gasps of pleasure. The unsuitableness of the room to herself did not strike

her. The room was strange. It was done in curious shades of purple and sorrowful gray with a bizarre note of clear orange that, somehow, pulled the color scheme together. There was very little furniture, but what there was was beyond reproach. Jane looked about her, feeling rather odd. She recalled the room as it had been, full of odds and ends from all over the house—ugly, comfortable, haphazard, the dumping ground for discarded family chattel, completely the room of the daughter-at-school.

"It goes well with your hair," Anne decided, her unusual eyes half closed, "but you are a little too positive for it. Too clear drawn. I had forgotten. Old blue would have been better—or May green."

Jane felt uncomfortable. She said hurriedly:

"Anne, what an adorable teddy! Those dear little bows on the straps and the embroidered forget-me-nots——"

Anne murmured:

"It was part of my first—no, my second trousseau. I remember thinking Dave was just the type. Well, no matter! You like it? You may have it. I've never had it on until tonight. I was possessed by a streak of economy recently and decided to wear out the entire hope chest. I can't stand anything myself, nowadays, but hemstitched handkerchief linen——"

Her white body gleamed through the pink veiling,

a veiling that was like a manufactured blush across the ivory of her flesh. She slid into her own room and, a moment later, Francine, cordial yet supercilious, brought Jane the little chemise. The maid said:

“Mademoiselle will bathe? And dress? I ’ave unpack’ ze bags.”

It was Jane’s homecoming. She was excited, interested, vaguely afraid and unconsciously forlorn.

CHAPTER II

SUMMER, in the old gray-shingled house at Easthampton was very like, and yet unlike the previous summers. All the old crowd was there and Jane found herself in that half-way, sub-deb position which is so anomalous. "Anne's bunch," as Jane called it, was very nice to her. One or two of "Anne's men" fought to dance with her, brought her candy on their week-end visits. But she was not one of them. Her own little set consisted of girls who had been at school with her, of her own age, a lithe, hard-swimming, tennis-playing, golfing, giggling coterie, with sunburned necks rising from sheer dancing frocks. The "men" were college undergraduates, for the most part, with now and then an "older man" who professed himself tired of the sophistication of the older girls.

Jane was very popular. She swam well, played good tennis and golf and danced like a feather. Her mother's widowed sister, Mrs. Angell, spent the summer with them, as usual, a nominal chaperon. Between Aunt Hattie and Anne there existed an armed neutrality. She had long since washed her hands of Anne. She loved Jane and, being a

worldly and rather wise woman, she concentrated on chaperoning her younger niece, despite Anne's derisive comments that such an attitude must have been dug up with King Tut. But Mrs. Angell was anxious for Jane. She need not have been. Anne, with one cynical remark, had protected Jane completely.

"You'll find some hip-pocket hounds in the crowd. Leave them alone. It's stupid for a youngster to drink. You'll spoil your complexion and possibly ruin your chances. I don't know. It doesn't seem to matter nowadays. But what does matter is this—*never let any one get anything on you*. Keep your head. And you can't keep it in parked cars and drinking synthetic gin."

Contrary to most advisers, Anne set the example. She was scornful of the hectic excitements of the younger set. She disliked to drink, so she did not drink. She disliked promiscuous mauling, so she was not mauled. But her popularity did not suffer. She was a little feared by the young people of her class; they found her "too clever" and "damned highbrow" according to the sex which thus pronounced sentence upon her. But Anne was not worried. She knew that she had one thing which would hold them—her unusual appearance. And she relied for entertainment on her "imported" guests, young men and women, met heaven knows

where and heaven knows how, but always presentable, and always amusing.

Jane acquired one suitor, a nice boy, just out of Yale. The family looked on him with neutrality. He was young, of course, but he had backing, and an excellent social position. His name was Roger Weston, and Anne said, indifferently, to Mrs. Angell:

"Well, if it comes to anything—it might be worse. The Westons aren't rolling but they have plenty. She's too young for the ones I'd picked. My judgment miscarried there."

Mrs. Angell said nothing. The more she saw of Jane, the more she saw of Anne, the more she decided that any man who was decent and well-bred and of means would be the right man—for Jane.

But Jane was of another opinion.

In the middle of the summer she wrote to Fan Smith.

"I'm sick and tired of this gang. Same old bunch. Nothing new. The boys are too silly for words and the girls give me a *pain*. You asked about Roger. He's a peach, of course, but I can't get up a thrill. The only man worth looking at is Ralph Dale—he's in Anne's crowd and has the most divine eyes and such a cynical, tired face. He's an editor, or something. But he won't even look at me. Have you had any proposals, Fan? I suppose so.

Isn't it too *flat* for words? I thought I'd just about *die* when I had my first, but I didn't. It was last week going over to Canoe Place in Roger's car. He stopped and I could see him getting up his courage. He looked awfully silly, all red in the face and funny. He made me sick, grabbing my hand and all that. I said no, of course. I told Anne and she wasn't a bit sympathetic. She said men weren't marrying much nowadays and I'd better take what I could get. She couldn't have meant it. I don't love Roger. I used to think that didn't matter much. Anne says it doesn't, but now I know it *does*. Imagine a man pawing—ugh! Write me and tell me all about yourself——

“Oodles of love, darlin’.”

But when Fan did write, announcing, italicized, her engagement and suddenly reticent as to details—which was unlike the old Fan—Jane almost regretted her negative. After all it must be fun to be engaged, to have a man always around when you wanted him, and steady flowers instead of occasional, and a duck of a ring.

She was nicer to Roger after that letter. This produced the inevitable result and she refused him once again.

During the summer, she made one visit at Greenwich and it was borne in upon her how much more “noticeable” she was away from Anne, from her

father, from Wynne. Most of the people she met were, of course, friends of her family, but there were new ones, also. She had a sense of being herself, not of being a mere background to Anne and the rest, and she preened a little under it. It was very pleasant. But she was not allowed to entirely forget her sister. Very often an introduction to her was followed by:

"Miss Marlowe, are you—you must be, Anne Marlowe's sister. I met her at Palm Beach last winter. She's the cleverest——" etc., etc.

Sometimes Jane wished, with a little flash of anger, that she had been an only child.

"The clever Miss Marlowe!" "The beautiful Miss Marlowe!"

Jane, "Miss Marlowe's sister," set her little, even teeth and vowed to herself that she'd do something. She'd show them! But what?

Her début in the fall was a very gorgeous affair at the Ritz. Hundreds of invitations, a number of well dressed, if uninvited, guests, a lavishness in the matter of food and drink and the best orchestra in town. Jane's gown was very lovely—and so was Jane. But Anne was very much in evidence in the palest mauve velvet, her bright-dim hair in a silver snood, silver slippers on her little feet. Anne, sitting on the edge of a table; Anne, smoking a cigarette; Anne, with the men three deep about her,

saying lazily, "Go away. I won't dance with any of you. I'm bored to death."

After the début a winter of theatres, dances, Junior League and winter sports and two weeks at Palm Beach.

She went with Anne and Mrs. Angell. It was very new to her. She loved every minute of it. Anne was sick with ennui—so she said—and spent a good deal of her time alone in a wheel chair or at Bradley's. But Jane was happy—not perfectly happy—but happy. She loved the climate, she loved the bathing and she most especially loved the dancing. The men were older than the boys she had known. She loved that, too.

But she grew self-conscious. It was Anne, as usual, who had worked the change.

"I wouldn't be seen so much with Allan Ryder, if I were you."

"Why not? He's awfully nice."

"Yes, indeed. His wife thinks so, too!"

"His wife!"

"Certainly. You didn't think anything as attractive as that would be unencumbered, did you? How naïve!"

"But—but—he never speaks—I didn't know."

"Jane, don't be stupid! When a man is presented to you, people aren't apt to say, 'Here is Allan Ryder. His wife is in Europe.' Half the time one doesn't

know, even if the man is from one's own town. And Ryder is from Cleveland——”

“But——”

“Don't look so bewildered. Of course you needn't cut him or anything like that. Dance with him, golf with him, if you like, but be sure it's more or less in a party. Don't ride off around the Lake alone with him as you did last night, that's all. Go as far as you like, my dear, but be sensible about it.”

Jane was a little sick. Allan Ryder had been so attentive. He had confided in her a little last night. He had said he wasn't happy. That she was like a fresh northern breeze blowing through the overscented, semi-tropical atmosphere of the place. He had held her hand. She had let him. She had liked it.

She couldn't be quite at ease with him the next day on the beach. Dancing with Anne, in the mid-morning, he asked:

“What's the matter with Little Sister? She looked at me this morning as if I were a walking Bubonic Plague.”

“I told her you were married.”

“My God, what a recommendation! Didn't she know?”

“She did not.”

“Does it put me out of the running?”

“It should.”

"How about you?"

"I'm twenty-five, Allan."

"So you are. Well, are you dining with me at the Everglades tonight? I was going to ask Jane but——"

"Ask her. Ask me, too, and a half dozen others."

"Why the publicity?"

"I drive better with a gallery, Mr. Ryder!" said Anne, as the music stopped and he took her to her table.

He was smiling when he left her. Jane had been very sweet—he'd been a little tempted. Oh, nothing wrong, of course, but—— However, it wouldn't do. He'd thought her like the rest of that débutante set, had fancied her bewildered innocence a mere, pretty mask. Apparently it was real. How she had looked at him, that child, this morning on the beach. Reproachful, a little stricken.

Anne now. She knew the ropes. Clever as the devil. And very piquant. He liked a girl who could play the game and not even burn her fingers.

So he was casually pleasant to Jane, almost fatherly. And Jane wrote in her diary, "I think he has broken my heart——"

It was a relief to be back in New York with spring coming and Roger ever so attentive, and the summer plans to be discussed.

It seemed that Dr. Marlowe was actually going to carry out his threat. He was—he had, practically, retired. He was sailing for France in June and Anne was going with him. Her play would have been produced by then, her book was out; it had sold two thousand copies and then died. She laughed a little. “I didn’t know there were two thousand fools of that sort in the world,” she had said when the royalty check came in.

Wynne would sail with them and later go on to Paris. Dr. Marlowe planned to go to India in the fall; Anne would come home. Jane was to stay with Mrs. Angell, when she was not visiting. They would probably go somewhere to a hotel. It was all rather vague.

Anne’s little play had a certain smart success. The opening night was fraught with wonder and terror to Jane, who sat in the box with her father, Wynne, the author and a couple of young male and female admirers of Anne’s. Anne herself, in a straight white dress, looked unconcerned. Her eyes were critical rather than “misty” (as a very young reviewer afterwards said of them) and if she drew in her breath sharply at one time it was at the clumsiness of one of the minor characters who had stumbled—blank verse not being his forte.

The play had, Anne’s father said, “the attraction of the perverse. It has no sense, it has no plot, it

uses beautiful words in unusual places; it is full of melancholy and a certain denatured passion. It will succeed—for a few weeks.”

He was right. Society flocked out of loyalty to its own, out of curiosity. Some of the younger literati proclaimed “Passion and Pierrot” the “most significant theatrical production of the season, embodying as it does the beauty and the psychology of the defeated,” whatever that means, as Anne afterwards said.

She was tired of her play, tired of being asked to speak at “advanced” clubs, weary to death of everything that had amused her during the past season. She sailed with her father and Wynne with a deep sense of gratitude. She and her father would settle for a while in a Normandy village. Anne saw herself rustivating prettily and became, a few weeks before sailing, the most violent advocate of simplicity. She took to being “natural,” left off her lip paint, banded her hair in a conventional style and wore peasant smocks and flat slippers. Her father said, resignedly, “Well, it will last until Paris calls her. We must bear with it patiently.”

Jane saw them off, in June. Her aunt was established at the house and the process of closing up began. At the next to last minute they had decided on Easthampton again, to summer at the *Maidstone*. They “knew every one,” and why make a

change? Mrs. Angell would be more comfortable there during Jane's absence on her round of visits.

The summer was uneventful save that in the middle of it Jane contracted measles from some small fry on one of her visits and was quite painfully and ridiculously ill. She went to the Southampton hospital and emerged several pounds thinner, rather weak and extremely disgusted with herself. Anne wrote rarely, Wynne never, and Dr. Marlowe fitfully. From their letters she gathered that Anne had wearied of rusticity as exemplified by a lack of modern plumbing and would be in Paris in the early fall. She would then come home and take up her residence in the little Washington Square apartment she had selected before she left. The matter of subletting had occurred to her, so she had taken it and then released it for the summer months.

She wrote:

"And still you allow the faithful Roger to languish? Are there no new suitors in prospect? Really, Jane, it's too bad of you! What are we to do with you? The house has been put on the market, as you know, and Dick will start off on his Oriental tour when he leaves me in Paris under Wynne's casual chaperonage."

In the end Mrs. Angell went back home to Pittsburgh, Jane having flatly refused to live with her

indefinitely, and Anne was forced to make her apartment "do" for two instead of for one.

Mrs. Angell stayed with both girls at a hotel until the change was effected. She was not in the least hurt by Jane's refusal to go to Pittsburgh with her. She agreed secretly, with Jane.

"They have no right to make their plans without considering me," said Jane, all red hair and temper and tears. "I'm as much a part of the family as Anne is—or Wynne. Why should they think that I'd get married just to be out of their way? I think it's *dreadful*! Why should they want to shunt me off on you? I'm their responsibility, Father's anyway."

Mrs. Angell would have been glad to take Jane, as Anne and Dr. Marlowe had suggested to her in certain tactful communications. But she felt that the girl was right. You simply could not ignore one member of your family, drop her off, so to speak, at a way station as so much excess baggage, marked "unclaimed." It was heartless of Anne; it was worse than heartless of Dick Marlowe. Ethel would turn in her grave, thought Mrs. Angell, sombrely. And as far as she herself was concerned—her own little place in Pittsburgh would be uncomfortably crowded with the addition of a large, healthy girl who was none too tidy, whose appetite was beyond chicken salad and tea, who took up so much room,

displaced so much air by reason of her sheer animal vitality. And Mrs. Angell would have to change her way of living. It was all right to chaperon her niece or nieces during the summers and for trips, and Dick was very generous about money. But the rest of the year was her own. She had her reading club, her bridge club, her lectures, her music and her friends. Into her quiet, well-ordered life, her little, perfectly innocuous, platonic friendships, Jane would not fit at all.

Anne said, inspecting the apartment on the day they moved in:

"You'll have to sleep on the guest divan in the studio. I had only planned for one bedroom and I've a three years' lease at a very fair rent. I'm sorry, Jane. You can use the bathroom as a dressing room. I couldn't figure it out any other way."

Jane said:

"There's room in the bedroom for twin beds."

Anne started with horror.

"My dear child, I couldn't share my bedroom with any one with any more happiness than I could share my toothbrush. No. I am willing to have you with me, but not willing to make myself more uncomfortable than is strictly necessary. And one more thing. I am no duenna. You'll have to fend for yourself. It's about time you learned. I shan't step in again as I did during the Allan Ryder busi-

ness; I can't cover up your mistakes as I did summer before last when you followed that impossible Dale man around like a sick puppy. You'll have to work out your own salvation. If you want to have an affair, go ahead and have it—but be discreet about it."

"Anne!"

"You can still blush! What an asset! But I mean it. I would not have said such a thing to you a year ago. If your object was matrimony your path had to be very straight and very narrow; only by such a route does the average woman reach the conjugal chamber. But—you haven't encouraged any possibilities. You turned down the one serious suitor you had and it looks to me as if you had retired from the conventional lists. All right. It upsets my plans, that's neither here nor there. There's no reason why we shouldn't live peaceably together. I'm not hard to get along with. But please don't confide in me or expect confidences. It's damned hard," said Anne, looking about the big studio room, a frown between her delicate brows, "for sisters to be friends. The blood tie seems to preclude that. But we'll try. And I'll tell you for your own good that the most satisfactory friendships are those in which no confidences are exchanged. Women are such fools."

She rose and walked to the divan where Jane sat huddled, her chin in her hands. She touched her

lightly on the shoulder and smiled down at the younger girl, Anne's own bewildering, elfin smile.

"Cheer up. You can have a very good time if you keep your head. Don't talk much—your looks speak louder than words."

She drifted from the room and was heard in the tiny kitchen talking to the little colored maid who was to do for them during the day. Jane sat where she had left her. It was a warm fall day but she felt chilly. Her thoughts limped. She felt uncertain, as the fifth wheel must always feel. For one terrible moment she wished herself in Pittsburgh with Aunt Hattie. Life with Mrs. Angell might be dull but it was safe—there was affection in it.

Anne came back.

"That woman is too stupid to live," she said in exasperation. "Jane, I don't think she likes me. Suppose you see what you can do with her. I want to have a housewarming here tomorrow night. She thinks sandwiches are islands."

Jane got to her feet. She knew less than nothing about housekeeping, but she reflected that she might be able to learn more readily than her sister. That was a comfort—to think there was something which she might eventually master and which would remain a closed book to Anne. Glad to have her thoughts distracted, she went into the kitchen and confronted the temperamental West Indian.

The end of their first day in Washington Square found Anne out to dinner and Jane receiving her first lessons in the gentle art of cooking from a pacified and flattered Amelia.

CHAPTER III

ANNE'S apartment—it was never known as “Jane’s” or even as that of the “Marlowe girls”—was just off Washington Square, in an old, remodelled house, up one flight of echoing stairs that Anne, eventually and with regard for her nerves, had carpeted at her own expense. The studio, or living room, was large and splendidly lighted. It had windows on a garden and an open fireplace. The bedroom was of fair size, the bathroom quite superior, and the kitchen a compact, doll’s-house affair. The rent was more in keeping, in size, with the studio than the kitchen.

From the Marlowe house Anne had taken such furniture as she needed, other pieces going to storage, some on sale with the house. Anne had selected her own bedroom furniture—which was very Chinese in effect—she had taken the piano, the portrait of her mother, the Corot, the ancient andirons, and two divans—one which had been in the Gramercy Park living room, another which had been in a sewing room and was of the type known as a bed-davenport. She had taken some comfortable chairs and a few for beauty, and not endurance. She had furnished her little kitchen from the big one in

her father's house and she had taken a great many books, her own and the accumulated fiction library of the household. Her apartment-studio was equipped with built-in book shelves and these were now laden with a very odd mixture of volumes.

The curtains were new, the rugs came from the old house, and also the lamps. The apartment was interesting without being bizarre—with the look of a well-bred woman who "goes in" for the arts. It did not sacrifice comfort to modernity, but was an apartment to which people liked to come.

By winter their lives ran smoothly enough. Anne was "writing" when the mood took her, and Jane, after vainly casting about in her mind for an occupation, was doing nothing—except overseeing Amelia, seeing that Anne was materially contented, looking out after the many guests and rather painfully, but with increasing aptitude, mending the linen and running lingerie ribbons. Also doing the marketing.

She and Anne had the same very adequate allowance, in addition to which Anne had some money "of her own," as Jane put it. Jane had a small savings account to which her family had added from time to time after its conventional establishment at her birth. They were enabled to entertain, to take taxis, to eat at the Brevoort or Lafayette when the urge was on them, and, in Jane's case, to help the chronically impecunious and optimistic.

"Jane, has Evelyn Evans borrowed money from you?"

"A little—why?"

"Nothing. It's your own money. She'll never pay it back. She is a notorious sponger. And when she *has* any surplus, she hands it over to her pilgrim-poet—Larry Kayle."

"She gives him money!"

"Why not? He writes poems to her—and renders other services."

Jane was no fool. Her face went scarlet.

"That's disgusting. Why didn't you tell me?"

"It's not my concern."

"But you ask her here—and Kayle, too."

"Why not? They are very amusing."

"I'm willing to feed them," Anne went on, "even to quench their thirst and supply their cigarettes. I buy their books and attend the failures of their plays and subscribe to their magazines. They amuse me. But I won't lend them money. I do not wish to make the usual gestures of the philanthropist. All the people who come here have something to recommend them if it is only an original sin. But once I—or you—start lending money we shall have a bread line several leagues long in front of the door, composed of all the down-and-outers, never-weres and never-will-bes in the Village. And that I really couldn't stand. They must give me something in

return for hospitality; I will not be a meal ticket or a bank account for dullards."

Jane said:

"I thought all of them earned their livings."

"My dear, half of them come from Speonk or Paw Paw and a few have substantial families somewhere in back of them. Half of them will return one day to Speonk or Paw Paw and to the family bank, the family hardware store, the family dairy farm. Now and then there is a real pearl among the Teclas, like Lily—like Paul Abadie."

"Lily"—her other name was, temporarily, Gordon—was a woman of about thirty-five with whom Anne felt herself very much *en rapport*. Lily, who hoped to divorce her present husband, was said, erroneously, to be of excellent Southern family and had real talent. She was a poetess of no mean achievement and had lately been brought violently to the attention of the public, which had taken her to its bosom with all the enthusiasm of a discoverer. Anne liked her, Jane did not. She had a pale, perverse beauty, the figure of a boy, the mind of a serpent, and the pen of a malicious archangel. She was vain, utterly unmoral and could be extremely charming. At present Anne engaged her attention and she was in and out of the apartment, Anne's familiar spirit. The poem which opened her second volume, "Lost Stars" by Lily Lawrence, was written to

Anne and begins "*There is a white confessional to which I come——*"

Paul Abadie, son of a French father and an Irish mother, was the latest victim to Anne's lazy and caustic charm. Jane liked him very much; he had appeal of the engaging, little, lost-boy sort. He was tall and slim, with Irish blue eyes and dark hair, and a fine, sensitive face. He wrote rather sparkling book reviews, an occasional excellent poem, and, in order to eat, short stories with a Gallic touch and more than a touch of the wanted American vulgarity, under a *nom de plume*, for lesser magazines. He was extremely temperamental, in a not disagreeable manner. Moody, all heights and depths, one moment a vivid jester, wearing cap and bells gallantly, the next moment a morose questioner at the gates of a veiled destiny.

Occasionally, Jane, meeting old school friends of hers by chance, would leave the scented, smoky atmosphere of the apartment, filled all hours of the day and night with the wrangling voices of people who talked more than they did anything else, and journeyed up town to the quiet purlieus of Park Avenue or the West Fifties, the East Sixties, and had lunch, or tea, or dinner, with the friends who had not forgotten her. She liked these lapses into the conventional. She liked the service at table, the empty, well-bred chatter, the "do you remem-

ber?" sessions. More than anything she liked the little flutter her appearances aroused.

"Jane, is the Village as wild as they say?"

"A little wild—and more than a little woolly."

"Please tell us——"

For once the center of attention, Jane would launch into an expurgated or exaggerated—depending on her audience—account of the recent party, a recent scandal, a recent nine days' wonder. Listening to Anne and her friends had made of Jane a fluent talker—when away from them. If some one put a question, asked an opinion, it was so simple to say, to herself, "How would Anne?" and then answer as Anne would have answered, having heard, so often, Anne reply to just such a question. She did not realize at the time how much she had absorbed, sitting quietly in the corner of the studio listening to the conversation that glittered all about her like so many jewels—or French paste. No one, in the studio, ever dreamed of asking her opinion; as Paul Abadie said, "She is so decorative, the little Jane, that one asks nothing of her except to *be*."

It was only by degrees that Jane realized how her escapes into the heavier air of the surroundings she was born to had in them an element of almost perilous delight. Several times she met a man—or a girl—at the houses of her friends and was amazed to hear them say:

"So this is Jane Marlowe. I've wanted to meet you for so long—but, remember, I'm a very prosaic person and a little afraid of clever women!"

Not a word of Anne!

From consciously parroting, Jane forgot the source of her occasional wit, and seriously thought herself into the rôle she was playing, much as many actresses do. She ceased to separate herself from her lines and often, sitting silently, in the studio, or busy cutting sandwiches, passing the toast and caviar, pouring the drinks, she marvelled at her own self-effacement. It gave her a sense of a little private jest at the expense of all these clever people. If they knew—if they could only know—how, *uptown*, she was the central figure in more than one drawing room, how, at more than one dinner party, attentive ears were turned her way.

A make-believe world, but she loved it. A make-shift life but she had chosen it. And the warping of her natural simplicity, the forgetting of those things for which her untarnished nature still made its subconscious demands was gradual but complete.

One night, returning from Dolly Sanderson's theatre party, a little flushed with the triumph of her beauty and the success of her comments, she found Anne alone. This in itself was an unusual circumstance, and to find her crouched over the fire that the early spring chill demanded, paler than ever,

her eyes like stars, her hands shaking, was too amazing to be genuine. Jane, the moment she had entered the apartment, thinking to find some of the "crowd" there, had felt her borrowed mantle slip from her. She became Jane, listening Jane, unnoticed save by patronage.

"Anne—what is it?"

Anne said:

"Paul."

"Paul! Is he ill?"

"Worse. In love."

Jane laughed outright. She dropped her evening cape and stood revealed, all the soft curves of her young body loving the sheath of chiffon that clothed her, her red head flaming over the excitement-rouged cheeks.

"With you, of course. But I've known it for some time."

"So have I—naturally. But never that it could be contagious."

"You mean——"

She was stricken dumb with astonishment. Anne rose from the footstool on which she had been curled and began walking up and down the dimly lighted room.

"I mean that I'm in love with him. I could scourge myself," said Anne, unhappily, "but it is so. And it isn't like the other times. There is always

one who turns the cheek. Well, I've stopped being a cheek turner. I am fatuous, ridiculous, a little sickening. And I must have him——”

“Anne, how wonderful! When will you be married?”

Anne stopped dead. She flung back her little head and laughed without mirth, with the sound of glass breaking on ice. She said:

“How like you, Jane! My dear, I don't want to marry him. That wouldn't fit in with my life at all.”

“What shall you do?” asked Jane, after a pause.

“God knows.”

She brooded a moment, standing there. Then she said:

“Well, let's go to bed. Perhaps sunlight will make a difference.”

But it did not. For several dreadful weeks she concerned her sister by her moods, her lack of appetite, her refusal to see any one—except Paul. With him she was amazing. She kept Jane in the room with her as often as it could be managed. She treated him abominably. She flouted and scorned and mocked him and sent him away—and wrote him a special delivery six minutes afterwards. She was unbearable and how Paul endured it Jane never knew. But he did. He met Anne mood for mood, only reversed; gay when she was sombre; sombre

when she was gay; tenderness for brutality; indifference for yielding. One day Jane, going to him in the studio—Anne was locked in the bedroom, denying that she ever wished to see him again—asked:

“Paul, what are you going to do with her?”

“Marry her.”

“She’ll never do it!”

“She shall—and will.”

He sat on the divan smoking, his shabby clothes worn with a charm all his own. He flicked the ashes from the cheap cigarette to the floor and said:

“Listen, my little sister. She loves me. She desires me. Oh, do not wince and move away. There are such women, you know. And if she will *not* marry me? Well, what then? Will she become my mistress? Do not make the round eyes at me, Jane. You have heard enough of the spotty talk of the Village to be able to bear a plain spoken word. No, she will not become my mistress. She is too conventional, essentially. Nor, as a matter of fact, do I wish her to be irregularly my property. What to do, then? The answer to that is—wait.”

He crushed out the cigarette in a little jade tray, and said:

“I love her.”

Jane said, practically:

“But, Paul——” She hesitated. She could not

say, "You can barely support yourself. What of Anne, Anne to whom the comforts are the very breath of life?" But Paul Abadie read her thoughts.

"But—on what shall we marry? You are right to ask it. I ask myself. Today, I know. I have accepted the position of editor on the magazine, *"Life Stories."*

His face twisted wily. Jane cried out:

"Paul, you'll hate it."

"Possibly. Probably, in fact. But there will be time to write—my own things—unless I shall have been too beaten and weary reading other peoples' by the dozens. Well, we shall see."

He went away without seeing Anne. He stayed away for a week. No word came from him. He appeared as suddenly as he had left. Anne surrendered.

There was talk of an immediate marriage but that was set swiftly aside. Some lingering throw-back to conventional ancestors influenced Anne to wait until she had heard from her father, whose very infrequent letters were coming now from India. She wanted a letter from Wynne, and when, on Jane's writing her, Aunt Hattie insisted on coming up from Pittsburgh to view, as she wrote, "that reckless man with my own eyes," Anne put no obstacle in her path. Besides there were a number of things to settle.

"My lease. Paul, I can't bear to let this place go.

And where would we put my furniture?" asked Anne, largely ignoring Jane's part ownership. "Surely not in your little hole of a place."

"What about me?" asked Jane suddenly, and Anne looked at her wide-eyed.

"Of course. You wouldn't care to marry your faithful—what's his name? Oh, don't get annoyed, child, I didn't mean it! We will want you with us—certainly. What do you say, Paul? We can live on here, and take the little room up the hall, with the bath, for Jane. She can pay board! Isn't that a lovely idea? From Little Sister to Independence? How about it?"

"My dear, I am perfectly willing to stay on here. You may spend your money as you wish. But I shall run the house. I have no inclination to be altogether supported."

And so that was that. Paul gave his fiancée the lovely old ring which had been his mother's, and Anne astonished and seriously vexed her circle by withdrawing her hospitable invitation to "drop in any time," and by roughening her slender fingers with needles and ruining her pots and pans with burnt concoctions sacrificed on the domestic altar. Spring became summer, and a letter from Wynne arrived. Aunt Hattie came and saw and was partially conquered. She fell in love with Paul and was sincerely sorry for him. She informed Jane

that if she "couldn't stand" it, she must come out to her. Things would be arranged anyway. At least for the honeymoon period she must come.

Dr. Marlowe cabled, laconically, "Luck, you'll need it," and instructed his lawyers, who had his power of attorney, to step down and look over the situation for themselves. He also sent a check, and Anne's allowance would continue. He settled a sum of money on her which would approximate the month to month amount and regretted, in a pencilled letter, written from Burma, that he could not be home for the wedding. He never expected to be home again, said Anne's father, cheerfully.

The atmosphere was one of domesticity, tenderness, nervousness and an inner, tingling excitement. Jane felt "out of it." She looked forward to the fall wedding with dread and with anticipation. Then she went down to Greenwich again to visit the Sandersons, one hot week-end in July, and met Rupert Barry.

CHAPTER IV

MANY years after, Jane said to herself, with a touch of awe, not untinged with humor, "Well, if it hadn't been Rupert it would have been the next man." And in a measure this was true. She was in a mood, unhappy yet expectant.

Anne's unusual happiness, the *waiting* atmosphere which surrounded her, which softened her cynicism, took the edge from her tongue, and made her seem, somehow, almost commonplace, had had its effect on Jane.

Once she had walked into the studio and had chanced on Anne and Paul standing, mouth to mouth, in a grave, almost melancholy embrace. Anne's arms were lax at her side. It seemed that she must have fallen had it not been for Paul's arms around her. Her little, slim body was bent backward, her eyes were shut, the eyelids heavy—there was a sense of strain about the clasping figures, a certain dark, beautiful tragedy.

Jane slipped out of the room as silently as she had entered. Her heart beat thickly in her young throat, her eyes were full of tears. Even on the stage such scenes had always affected her—but to see those

two there—not play actors, not mummers simulating a typewritten passion—but breathing human beings, lost to the world. Later, when she went back and heard them wrangling humorously over some trivial matter—the color of Anne’s new hat or the height of Paul’s collar—she marvelled at them. Impossible to believe they were the same two who had stood there. Jane thought, “If only I were an artist——” and indeed it would have made a picture: the engrossed, mindless figures, the long room, dim blue in a spring twilight, back of them, on a high mantel, a black bowl filled with the fluid gold of daffodils.

Jane’s own future life seemed so uncertain. She couldn’t ask to join her father or Wynne; Aunt Hattie was out of the question, save as an occasional refuge. She couldn’t, much as she fancied Anne might like the idea, strike out for herself, make her own little solitary life somewhere, take rooms and work at some art-y interest or other as an excuse. And to live with Paul and Anne, to feel herself forever in their way, to know herself the Fifth Wheel, for always and always——

After all, had Roger Weston been at hand—but he was not. He had gone to South America. And she met Rupert.

Rupert Barry was a New Yorker, born and bred. A young lawyer in an ancient, conservative firm;

a graduate of Harvard, a man of perhaps two and thirty with a keen intelligence and an overwhelming ambition. Meeting Jane for the first time at the Sandersons', he was instantly attracted by her beauty, and immediately thereafter, hearing her say something old and wise and caustic in her fresh young voice, was filled with an enthusiasm quite alien to his careful, calculating nature. Brains—and beauty! It was almost too good to be true!

Her name conveyed instantly to him the position to which she was born, the circle in which she might move by right. Barry was only recently of that circle. His family was solid, good, middle-class, and there remained of it only his pleasant, efficient mother. But social in the *Vanity Fair* sense, it had never been. Through members of his law firm he had secured desired introductions and for a year or more had moved in the pleasing, colorful round upon which he had ambitiously centred his heart. Had he met Jane in any other surroundings, through his mother's friends, or had Jane been merely an attractive, clever girl engrossed in earning her own living, it is probable that he would not have followed up an introduction to her. He would have been attracted, that much stands to reason, but young Barry had been attracted before and knew that there is just one way to fight undesirable enchantment—which is, keep away from it. He was

not an emotional man. His head ruled him, at all times.

Meeting Jane, therefore, in the surroundings in which he meant to establish himself was, as he put it to his best friend, and only confidant, "A stroke of luck for you, my son." For Rupert was a well-bred climber, extraordinary as the contradiction in terms may be.

He devoted himself to her from the start in a way which seemed to set her apart from the rest of the world of women. He was not ostentatious, yet he made her a "marked woman," as Dolly Sanderson said after the first evening. She had come into Jane's room, a little rounded figure with a mop of black curls all over a small, well shaped head and had perched herself on Jane's bed, regarding her guest with shrewd affection.

"How do you like Rupert Barry?"

"Very much."

"Isn't he divine-looking? I simply adore those cold-looking men—eyes like green ice and that smooth, shining, blond hair."

Jane said:

"I like dark men better—like Paul."

"You would—because you're blond, too. But Rupert Barry is my idea of an attractive man. Lots of people don't like him, he's so sarcastic."

"Have you known him long?"

"Not very. Eve Bellows took him up and trotted him around last year. People thought—but it didn't come to anything. Anyway, I've never seen him as attentive to any one as he was to you tonight. He didn't let any other man get a look-in."

Jane said:

"If Anne had been here——"

"Oh, Anne!" Dolly, who had only met Anne once, and then at a time when the elder Miss Marlowe was suffering from a combination of cold-in-the-head and silence, shrugged her away with a gesture of dimpled shoulders. "Why are you forever harping on Anne? You've a perfect inferiority complex."

Time was when Jane would have said, "Golly! What's that?" but a winter in the Village had enlightened her on many subjects. She smiled briefly and said:

"Tell me more about your Barry man."

"My dear, he isn't mine. No such luck!" said the frank Dolly. "He won't even look my way. I can't tell you much. He's a lawyer, makes a good deal of money for his age and since Eve discovered him—met him at a Harvard game, I think—he's seen most everywhere. Dances and all that sort of thing. He rushes all the girls, but no one of them exclusively. He is interested in something very highbrow—international relations or some such thing—I don't know. They said he'd written a book—

I'm vague on it, anyway—but it's something. He dances like a dream and is a member of the Comedy Club."

She looked at Jane, who lay high among the heaped pillows in a sheer chiffon nightie, her red hair tumbled and her cheeks flushed.

"Jane! You're a duck! If I were a man I'd be mad over you. And we none of us see you half enough—stuck down there as you are. What will you do when Anne marries this poet person? Keep on living with them? I bet you do all the dirty work. I can just see you. It's a perfect crime, a girl of your looks and brains."

"Don't be silly."

"I'm not. Didn't Rupert say to me tonight that you had one of the most responsive minds he had ever encountered? There, I didn't mean to tell you—meant to save it for a 'trade-last'."

The two girls giggled a moment at the memories of their school days and Dolly asked:

"Heard from Fan lately?"

"Not very—she's too busy with her babies."

"Baby?"

"No, plural."

"My God!" said Dolly prayerfully, and added, "What about your sister? There won't be much room for you down there if she has an infant right away."

Jane had considered this possibility herself. She had spoken of it to Anne, a little embarrassed, a little frightened, somehow, and Anne had answered at some length. Jane transposed that answer now, for Dolly.

"She's not likely to. In the main, it's a sterile generation. By choice."

Dolly stared.

"Heavens, Jane! You didn't talk that way at school. You were always saying you wanted thirteen!"

"It's an unlucky number."

Dolly laughed, yawned, rose to her feet and groped for the little pink mule she had dropped.

"It's after two. Let's catch a little repose."

She kissed Jane and vanished into the adjoining room, calling back over her shoulder:

"Breakfast in bed. Ring when you want it."

Alone, Jane flung superfluous pillows to the floor and lay on her back, her hands behind her head, slim ankles crossed. She was thinking of Rupert Barry. She had liked the flame of interest in the cold eyes. She had been flattered by the quiet, determined way in which he had singled her out from the others. They had been partners at bridge. Thank Heaven her father had taught her to play an average good game, not brilliant, of course—that remained for Anne, a brilliant, erratic game, shot with good

luck—but sound. Barry had no cause to find fault with her. The cards had run their way, and between rubbers, once when the drinks and things were forthcoming, she had walked with him on the wide stone veranda, and he had said in his remarkable, resonant voice: “I’ve heard so much of Miss Marlowe—from the Davenports and Dolly, of course, and others. I dreaded meeting her a little. I feared she might fall short—but—am I going to see you again after this delectable visit draws to a close?”

She had said yes. She had given him the address, the telephone number. The Davenports, an older couple, friends of her father. It had been of Anne that they spoke, no doubt. Well, they were abroad now. Anne. He would meet Anne. He would realize. She was conscious of a little cold fear and a sudden leap of her heart. He was so attractive. She held her breath thinking of him, of the way the smooth, blond hair grew, the look in his eyes, the handsome lines of a repressed mouth. She was afraid to have him meet Anne. But there were several days left to her yet. If she could impress her image upon his mind, indelibly. If she could, in some subtle fashion, win him, bind him to her. Would she be so afraid of Anne then?

Her heart hurt her—a little. She thought it the dawn of the love of which she had dreamed. But it was only a growing pain.

They played tennis together the next morning. Barry was an ardent athlete. He pursued physical exercise solemnly, he had little of the playtime spirit in the pursuit. He considered it, first of all, good for his health, and secondly, a considerable asset, socially. In the same painstaking manner he swam, rode and played golf.

Jane said to herself, triumphantly, "One up on Anne!" and so she was, for Anne, loathing any form of physical effort save dancing, put all games in the same category as a six-day bicycle race. "It may amuse people. It doesn't amuse me," she often remarked, "and why on earth should I get bedraggled, red in the face, calloused in heel and palm, if it doesn't amuse me? *Chacun à son gout!*"

Playing singles with Barry that morning Jane thought, with amazement, "Why, I can beat him!" And her second thought between serve and return was equally convinced, "But I mustn't!" And she didn't. Where she had learned this wisdom one cannot tell. Probably she was born with it.

Close sets, but Barry was triumphant by a margin.

He flung down his racquet and sat beside Jane on the wide green lawn, looking over toward the colorful rose arbor, the sweep of blue Sound in the distance.

"A hard fight," he told her. "You play a very good game."

To deny it would have been to belittle his own skill. Jane said nothing, and Dolly, from the shadow of a huge orange umbrella, remarked:

"I'll say she does. That girl has school cups and things galore."

Barry lighted a cigarette and, picking up his cap, tilted it over his eyes as he lay full length on the grass.

"It is always gratifying to vanquish a worthy opponent," he said lazily, and as Jane looked down and met the eyes that regarded her from the shade of the cap, she flushed a little. He was not referring solely to the game, she knew.

"Didn't someone say you wrote?" he asked her, as Dolly moved away with several of the house party who had come up from the other court.

"No, my sister."

Jane held her breath a little. Would she be asked to amplify? As a rule she amplified without the asking. In this instance the little bald, indifferent statement seemed the only one she could force over her lips.

"Your sister. Oh, I see——"

She said hurriedly, with no calculated coquetry, although he read it for such:

"Are you—very disappointed?"

"On the contrary—I am delighted. I don't like inky women!"

Jane laughed.

"Oh! Poor Anne. Why not?"

"It seems out of character. An echo. There have been no great women writers."

Jane felt solid ground beneath her mental feet. This question was still a moot one in Anne's circle.

"Sappho?"

"Sappho, of course. But was she quite a woman?"

Here, too, Jane was not wholly uninstructed. But she said:

"The Brontës? Jane Austen? George Sand?"

Barry groaned.

"Heaven deliver me! Must you? I refuse to argue. I have my opinions, those of the layman. But the water is deep. I can only repeat that women authors annoy me with their posturings and apings and gesticulations, their passion poured out in ink, their tenderness reserved for phrases."

He paused and added:

"But I've offended you?"

"Not at all," answered Jane, and added, a little alarmed at her own heresy, "We none of us take Anne very seriously."

She thought the heavens must open and Anne descend, an avenger, an exposé, upon her undefended head. But the sky remained the sealed blue book that it had been, the sun shone yellow-fire, the birds sang in the tall cherry trees. And Barry laughed.

"A prophet is not without honor—"

"Oh," said Jane, "just because I'm 'family'. Isn't that a fallacy—that you have to bow down and admire simply because another person's veins run with the same blood as yours. Family relationships, what are they but natural, biological accidents?"

Sheer Anne. Anne, eloquent over Wynne's paintings. Anne, critical of her father's fame. But Barry laughed outright.

"Clever——"

"And you don't care for clever women?"

"I adore them. They are so unnatural," he said. "I love them as much as I dislike the simple, native sort. Clever women who use their talents in clever ways, clever women who know they are clever, and above all, clever women who are beautiful—I am a worshipper at their shrine."

"And how must a clever woman use her talents?"

"In exploiting a clever man!" said Barry, getting to his feet as a hail from Dolly reached them. "I believe we're due to bathe."

He held out his hands to Jane and pulled her up. For the briefest space they stood there, hands fast, then, picking up their racquets, they turned toward the house. As they walked across the long stretch of "landscaped" lawn he said:

"I suppose that's blasphemy?"

Jane laughed at him. Her eyes were intensely

blue under the azure ribbon she had bound about her hair. Her white silk blouse was open at the throat, kissed to a deeper cream. There was a little sprinkling of golden freckles across her short nose, as if a drift of powdered gold dust had fallen from the sunlight, and, loving its new location, had stopped there. Barry looked down at her with approbation which warmed to something deeper as he looked. How lovely she was!

"You haven't answered me?"

"Must I?"

The others swarmed from the house to meet them. Dolly, a red bandanna tied about her black hair, called:

"I've your suit, Jane. Let's go."

As half a dozen closed around them, Barry said hurriedly:

"Will you go a round of golf with me this afternoon? And I believe we all go over to the Warrens' to dance tonight. Please let me have as many dances as you can wrest away from the ravenous throng!"

She made him no promises verbally but her eyes spoke.

Three days later she was back in town. Anne said, casually:

"Have a good time, Infant? Who was there?"

Jane told her. At the mention of Rupert Barry's name Anne knit her brows.

"Barry? Barry? Oh, I recall him now. The Davenports know him. They think him the 'coming man,' whatever that may be."

"At all events he's coming here," said Jane, with a slight flash of something like resentment. Anne looked up quickly. She was lying in a lounge chair near the open windows. Little beads of perspiration stood on her upper lip. She looked fagged.

"Repartee? It's not possible. And in this heat! Do you like him?"

"Very much. He's awfully clever."

"Danger there. Clever men never meant a woman any good."

"How about Father?" asked Jane aroused, and Anne answered:

"I shall not change my statement for Dick's sake."

"Paul, then."

Anne's face softened. She said, one slim, bare arm back of her head:

"Paul is not clever. He is an artist—yes. His 'cleverness', as you superficially call it, is temperament, talent. He exercises it in his work. Otherwise he is the normal, rather sentimental man whom a woman, with brains, can twist around her little finger, as the silly phrase goes."

Jane said, sharply:

"He's clever enough—in his dealings with you."

"No, he is a lover. That is instinct." She added, shrewdly, "And if you marry—I advise you not to seek a brilliant husband. You won't be happy. But you'd be happier than I would be—and a great deal more courageous."

Jane felt a little chill. She knew, in the depths of her, that Rupert Barry had received a wrong, or rather, a shaded impression of her mental ability. Could she keep it up? Would he find her out and turn indifferent? But that night, with Rupert's flowers making a little halo of scented color on one of the long tables, she slept sweetly, fearlessly, one hand beneath her childish round cheek.

CHAPTER V

JANE and Rupert Barry met several times before she brought him to the apartment. He had a little car. They drove to out-of-the-way inns in Westchester and on Long Island; they dined once at a summer roof. But Barry was not satisfied.

"I'd like to meet your sister."

"You shall."

"When is your father returning?"

"Never, he says."

Barry frowned a little. Dr. Marlowe's indifference to his children's welfare seemed curious and unpleasant to him. But Marlowe, from all accounts, appeared a law unto himself. The brother, in Paris, did not seem as far removed, for all that he never wrote. He wanted to meet the sister. Living down there like that, engaged to an impecunious young poet—and with her reputation for "dud" engagements. Barry wondered. He was by now as much in love with Jane as was compatible with a nature as cautious as his own; a nature in which passion wore dinner clothes, and to which impulse was almost entirely alien. Barry was a great believer in insurance and his ego was insurance against any kind of loss—or so he thought. Great loving, even

happy loving, means loss—loss of something, if it is only of self.

But, he did love Jane. Never let it be said of him that he did not. How much of this was based on what he thought her, what he desired her to be and not what she was, is uncertain.

Jane? She drifted. She read the signs with the eyes of all the Eve-women in the world. She waited the word with trepidation, longing and a little reluctance. It was the happiest period of her life. She awoke each day to new expectancies, new tremors; she went to bed each night with a shining new dream for a pillow.

She knew that he loved her. She thought that he loved her as much as she loved him.

So one night, some six weeks after their meeting, she brought him to dinner in Washington Square. She had begged Anne not to make an occasion of it. "Just us—and Paul," she had urged when Anne, tapping a pencil against her small white teeth, had suggested Lily Lawrence—"to amuse your Young Barrister." And Anne had agreed, thoughtfully.

Barry came. He fell into an instant liking with Paul Abadie. He couldn't approve, he couldn't help but patronize, he couldn't understand, but he liked him. And it was apparent to the dullest that he and Anne were, as instantly, courteously antagonistic.

Paul and Jane were as onlookers at that first en-

counter in which the slim, conversational swords crossed and flung sparks. Paul was amused and Jane was troubled. She had so wanted them to like each other! had been afraid that one of them—Barry to be explicit—might like too well. But she saw that the hope and the fear must both be relegated to the limbo of unnecessary emotions.

After dinner Anne and Paul went on to some party or other and Rupert was left alone with Jane. He both approved and disapproved of this solitude.

“Isn’t Anne beautiful?”

“Very. But—does she eat enough? She looks undernourished!”

“Oh, what a thing to say! She’ll always be thin, she always has been. I love it in her.”

“She doesn’t look much as if she could stand out against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Well, let us hope there will be no necessity. Abadie’s a very nice chap . . .”

He was thinking, “Lord, what a tongue that woman has. Sorry for Abadie . . . might as well marry a cup of poison.”

He turned to Jane.

“Let’s not talk about them. I was glad to meet them, glad to see them go. Now that’s settled, let’s talk of us.”

Jane said, obstinately, over the sudden sick lurch of her heart:

"But Anne is us—or rather—me—and I'm half—"

Barry laughed:

"You expect me to understand that? Well, I am resigned. What about Anne?"

"You don't like her!"

"My dear little girl, I scarcely know her!"

"What don't you like about her? She's lovely to look at, she's marvellously clever."

"Jane, what has all that to do with liking? So are you."

"What?"

"Lovely to look at—and clever."

Here was her opportunity. "No, no, you misread me. I am not clever—not as you think—not Anne's way. Just a very average girl, with the very average dreams—home and husband and a band of babies."

She said, instead:

"You mean . . ."

"That if I don't like Anne—and mind you I haven't admitted to you that I don't—I do like you—which is putting it tepidly enough. Jane, I love you—I love you very much. Shall we make it a double wedding—in the autumn?"

She thought, distracted, uncertain, "It's been said . . . and I don't feel anything."

But as she turned a face, that quivered childishly, toward him, his arms were around her and his cold

eyes, warmed now to the leaping of a little, alien flame, were triumphantly near.

"Jane—you love me?"

She put her arms up. They closed about his shoulders and her mouth shook. She shut her eyes and her head fell forward. His lips encountered, first, the soft, red darkness of her hair and then, as a hand beneath her chin forced her face to his, the young splendor of her mouth.

In that moment of unconditional surrender, Rupert Barry's heart was pierced with an authentic pang of passion and pity. He had known the one before—fleetingly—but never the other. And never the tenderness that weakened him, curiously, and veiled his eyes to all but the little petty needs of his nature, ambitions and calculations and cautions.

"Dearest."

In that moment, had the robes of her birthright fallen from her and left her beggar maid in his arms, he would have played, joyously and unthinkingly, the Cophetua.

When Anne and Paul came home it was settled—everything; the wedding, the little house, the honeymoon—even the color of the going-away dress.

"Do you like me in blue?"

"I adore you in any color!"

Paul, entering the long room, slightly in precedence of Anne, who had paused a brief moment in the hall,

looked keenly at the couple who rose from their obviously decorous positions on the same divan. He smiled, a slow, delightful smile. He came up to them and took Jane's hand in his own.

"May I be the first?"

He kissed her then as Anne came in to the softly-lighted room.

"Paul—such over-exuberance of the artist nature."

"Hush! Look at your sister!"

Anne's eyes, which wept so rarely, stung. She thought, "Isn't she beautiful—oh, my God, isn't she *blind!*" and held out, in a gesture as rare to her as tears, her long white arms.

After a moment she stroked the tumbled hair and lifted the flushed face from her shoulder.

"Jane, I beg of you. We are all acting like the last chapter of a bad novel."

She pushed the younger girl away for a moment and then held out her hand to Rupert.

"I don't like you particularly," she said, with that amazing smile, honey on an arrow, "but Jane seems to. And you aren't crazy about me—but that doesn't matter, either. I think we have at least one thing in common." Her voice took on a little grave formality, which affected Barry pleasantly. "As Jane's father and brother are not here, I think I shall be representing them both when I welcome you into the family."

Barry held the slim hand between two of his. His own voice was as formal as Anne's.

"Thank you. You make me very happy."

There was a moment of silence. Paul watched, grave and intent, his dark eyes shining; Jane, rosy and tremulous, looked from one to the other of the little group peculiarly her own. Her heart was big to agony. She had made another discovery in the last five minutes. *Anne loved her!* She hadn't dreamed it. Anne, who she had thought was "fond" of her, in that offhand, casual way. But it was more than fondness. She was sure of that now, for all time, no matter what new, or familiar, mask her sister might presently choose to assume.

A familiar one, then, as Anne detached herself, more than physically, and walked over to the long, Italian table.

She picked a straw-tipped cigarette from the tortoise box and lighted it. Over her shoulder she spoke to Paul.

"On the ice—champagne. I must have had a premonition. It's all very much according to Hoyle."

Paul laughed out and disappeared. Anne turned to the others.

"Sit down. We can't live on the peak all the time. Have a cigarette, Rupert. I think you'll find these very good, although why some one won't invent a tobacco which doesn't approximate inferior hay after

the third and a half draw, I'm sure I don't know. By the way, Rupert, Jane doesn't smoke. You'll find that a saving—especially if you are going to budget. I suppose all young people budget?"

"You and Abadie included?"

"Lord, no. I detest corsets, even financial ones."

Presently Paul was back with the slender stemmed glasses, and the pale golden bubbles danced at the crystal brims.

"*Glück auf, Kinder!*"

It was Anne's voice, high and clear. Rupert said, smiling a little:

"Isn't that a Teutonic expression employed *before* the chase?"

She laughed, lazily, over the lifted glass.

"Not exactly. I believe that would be bad luck or something. You say, 'I hope you break a leg'—or your neck—or some such hope of calamity."

Jane hardly knew how she got through the rest of that evening. She recalled afterwards Paul's few words and his good, concerned eyes, quietly happy in her own happiness when they rested on her, lighting to an unspeakable pride and joy when they looked on Anne. She remembered her lover's unusual good looks, the straight mouth, curved with emotion, the cold eyes warmed; she remembered Anne's light domination of the scattered talk.

"Where will you children live?"

"We can't run to mansions, but I have seen a little house down here—in Bride's Row, as they call it. It will be vacant in the fall, some one told me."

"Paul! We'll have to get another boarder! That aspect of the situation never struck me. We lose our Paying Guest!"

Jane was alone with Barry for a moment before he left. She clung to him with a desperate feeling that it was all a dream and that she clasped shadow and not substance. But his coat was under her fingers; she felt the flesh and muscles through it, living, real. She felt his kisses again and knew that the dream held.

"Tomorrow——"

"Tomorrow, I'm going to take you to Tiffany's."

She was later aware that Paul had gone too and that Anne had come silently into the living room where she lay, on the bed-divan, her arms behind her head—Anne, like a white shadow in the darkened room. A street lamp made one pool of gold on the rugs and the polished floor.

"Happy, infant?"

"So happy!"

Anne sat beside her, slim and straight in the ripple of chiffon which clothed her, slim hands locked about her knees. After a time, she said:

"Your young man has his heart set on a double wedding. Well, we will see, although I confess I do

not much relish sharing what we will call my début with another."

"Anne, if you'd rather not——"

"Don't be silly. I was only joking. Or partly. That will adjust itself. Personally I have changed my mind about weddings. I don't think I want a cut and dried one after all. But, as I said before, we'll see. You will like living down here, Jane?"

Jane sighed.

"Love it. Anywhere—oh, you know, Anne. But I had thought always that best of all I'd like a little place in the country—golf and tennis and a funny little house and maybe a Ford to meet the trains with."

"Idealist! But your Rupert is very urban. You'll never bring him around. It's smart to live in the country, of course, but not in that way."

"What way, then?"

"Oh, an estate. 'Georgian Manor' on the gateposts, a long drive, stables and servants' quarters and half a dozen train-meeting cars. And an apartment at the Gotham or Ritz for the winter months. You'd call it 'running up to town for the opera.' Sir Rupert would like that and, if I read the signs correctly, he'll have it, some day."

"Read the signs?"

"That is a successful young man."

Jane reached out and took Anne's hand.

"I wish you liked him a little better."

"I do like him. Only we are naturally antagonistic. We are too much alike, my dear. We are wary, we are wise. But it needn't make you unhappy. Watch and see, we'll be model in-laws, Rupert and I."

"He admired you tremendously."

"Jane, Jane, not married yet and already tactful for her man! He does not admire me—tremendously. He admires me—grudgingly. We are brother and sister under the skin, I take it. Speaking of brothers, I will write Wynne at once; it is doubly imperative that he come over for the wedding. Dick won't, I suppose. Well, that can't be helped."

There was silence for a time. The faint sound of late traffic came to them, the rumble of a very early milk wagon, a snatch of song from some exhilarated person exiled from South Europe.

"Jane, life isn't going to be easy for you. But the path of least resistance is the path marked out for you. You haven't the shoes to attempt any other."

Jane wondered at the words, at the feeling in the low voice. She said nothing, feeling very young and very uncertain. Anne rose, bent and kissed her, a rare caress, and departed as silently as she had come. Long hours after she was still awake, in the further bedroom, but Jane slept. Slept, after seeing in one vivid flash her whole future before her as she conceived it. Marriage! She was to be married

to Rupert. She would be dearer to him, as he to her, than his own soul; nearer than the very skin on his body. They would share and work and laugh and play together. There would be children.

The Fifth Wheel no longer. No longer just Jane. But Mrs. Rupert Barry. Marriage, there was the solution. Marriage and love.

CHAPTER VI

CONTRARY to general belief the period of the betrothal is not wholly free of doubt. Love is not entirely blind; it is more than likely merely near-sighted or astigmatic. Jane was not totally unaware of flaws in the jewel. She said of her lover, asking the question silently and unhappily of her own soul, "Is it possible that Rupert is snobbish?" But at once she corrected the, to her, palpable disloyalty, "No—not that, ambitious perhaps, and fastidious." She later mentioned these two qualities to Anne and received as a reply the flat statement that they were incompatible.

Anne was, as Jane put it to Barry, "Awfully nice." She seemed to be trying very hard to make Jane happy, to take a real interest in the younger girl's small concerns, the buying of the all-important rings, the selecting of the trousseau. To a detached observer—and to some not as detached—her attitude had in it something of the apologetic. And something more. Paul Abadie said to her once, "You remind me of the person who selects the most satisfying items on the menu for the breakfast of the innocent condemned," and he had been sorry once the words were spoken, for Anne had looked at him

and then burst into a passion of rare and difficult weeping.

"Anne, Anne, don't. You break my heart. She loves him, it will be all right."

"I know—I know—but it seems such a pity——"

And Paul, terribly distressed and cursing his own light carelessness, could only make feint to console her in the facile way on endearment and caresses.

Shortly after the engagement Rupert took Jane to call upon his mother. Jane was full of trepidation. "Suppose she hates me, Rupert?" And he had answered, lightly, "Why assume the impossible? Don't be frightened. You're marrying me—not my mother." But his words gave Jane scant comfort. He had told her very little of his mother, with whom she could only infer that he was on the best of terms. The other terror, "suppose I hate *her*?" given utterance to Anne only, did not seem such an important one.

But she liked her immensely. She found her to be a genuine person, alert, a little hard, a little rustically cynical, not in the slightest degree socially gifted, and not, to Jane's distress and astonishment, particularly impressed with her son.

The meeting took place in the uptown apartment which Rupert reluctantly, one supposes, shared with his mother. After the first rather obviously careless and high-handed introduction, Rupert left them

alone together. This had not been an arrangement of his own choosing, but Jane had insisted upon it.

"I'll get to know her better, Rupert."

"Very well, my darling, but I warn you Mother is a very outspoken person. Don't let her rattle you."

The apartment was haphazard as to furniture. One small colored maid presided lightly over the domestic machinery and opened the door to them, while Rupert was looking for his latchkey. She was all white teeth in a black face and personally agitated as to Mr. Barry's choice. Her cap much awry, an apron over something that was certainly not an accredited uniform, she greeted the couple with soft African intonations and exclamations intended to convey her heartfelt interest in their welfare. Rupert was curtly kind, but Jane, nervous and sentimental, was touched. Ansonia departed to the kitchenette beaming widely and convinced that Jane was the "prettiest and sweetest spoken white lady" of her large acquaintance.

Mrs. Barry came in directly from the kitchenette. Enveloping her spare, erect figure was a long blue apron. She had thick gray hair cut very short, eyes much like her son's in shape and color, and her skin was remarkably firm and young, touched with a healthy, baked-in color. She did not kiss Jane, that was not her way, but she shook her hand hard and cordially and asked her to sit down, in a friendly, if

somewhat distracted, manner. It was clear to Jane that the meeting was not, to Mrs. Barry, the world-shaking event that it was to her. And Jane, who had spent hours dressing for the encounter, rehearsing little phrases of filial import to herself, began to feel, as she told Anne afterwards, terribly flat.

"So you're going to marry Rupert?"

"Yes, Mrs. Barry, if," and Jane smiled from sheer nervousness, "if you approve."

"What in the name of common sense have I to do with it? Young people settle these things in their own way, nowadays."

Here Barry interfered with a graceful phrase or two and shortly after, not free of an unacknowledged relief, he took his unobtrusive departure. Jane sat straight in an old, shabby morris chair, not yielding her young body to its ancient and honorable curves. She crossed her slim feet and folded her hands in her lap. And she said, after a silence that seemed to her almost unbearable, "Oh, I *do* so hope you're going to like me!" and blushed at the impulse.

Mrs. Barry smiled and Jane caught her breath. She had never seen a smile like it. Wide, mischievous as a child's pertness, but wholesome as crusty bread, and she said, not unkindly amused:

"Well, I'm sure I don't see why I shouldn't. You're a very pretty little girl."

It was so unexpected that Jane laughed outright.

What she had previsioned, she herself could not have told. Sentimentality certainly, tears possibly, soul-searchings probably. Confronted by the calm amusement of the older woman her fear fled and never returned. She was, perhaps, a little disappointed of her "scene." But that didn't matter.

She leaned forward a moment and then back, drawing a deep, relaxed breath.

"Tell me something about Rupert. I'm a little afraid of him," confessed Jane. "And I'm not half as clever as he thinks I am!"

It was said, without thinking. And to, of all people, this woman who, because of her relation to Rupert, might become Jane's most dangerous enemy; a woman who, ten minutes previously, had been, to Jane, the veriest stranger.

The heavens did not fall. Mrs. Barry said, evenly:

"Yes, I can see that. He's talked about you. It's all in the way you start out, you know. I think he's enough in love with you to stand the shock of being disillusioned, if you want it that way. But if you don't—well, you'll have to be smarter than clever. They don't take so kindly to disillusionment after they've been married a while." She paused and added, reflectively, "Women aren't clever, really—not as a rule. A really clever woman, in the way you use the term, is sort of abnormal. What passes for cleverness is just an animal sort of shrewdness. Pro-

tective coloration, I think they call it nowadays. It's not new. Women have always had the power, but just lately they are beginning to use it more. The trouble is they often fool themselves as well as their husbands."

Jane was busy readjusting her preconceived ideas of Barry's mother. Barry had given her the careful impression that his mother was a very simple person, "salt of the earth, you understand," but no intellectual or personal frills. A woman who had had a difficult life, and who, even now, although Barry was well able to provide adequately for her, still adhered to the old ways of living. He had not in the least prepared Jane for a person of perception.

Mrs. Barry questioned Jane, a little absently, about her father and about Wynne and Anne. Jane answered, almost at random, wondering, almost anxiously, if Barry really was deceived as to his mother's true character or if, for purposes of his own, he deliberately ignored it. Then she roused herself to hear Mrs. Barry discourse rather vaguely of her son and his father.

"Rupert's father was a little like Rupert. Not as successful, by any means. No, not a lawyer. An accountant. Rupert was a very healthy baby, very active, into everything. Not easy to bring up. Temperamental, I suppose you young folks call it. But he's been a good son. Tell me some more about

this sister of yours. I got her book when Rupert began going about with you, and read it."

"What did you think of it?"

The bad child looked once more from Mrs. Barry's eyes as she answered deliberately:

"I thought very little of it. I thought she needed two things—a sound spanking and a good cathartic!"

Jane laughed and asked, "May I tell her that?"

"Certainly, you may. Bring her to see me and I'll tell her myself. It's all liver, you know. These young people. They haven't been looked after as children. Left to nurses. That's how I see it. Half this—what do they call it?—jazz age business is just indigestion; hungry indigestion, we used to say. And most of the books people read—God knows why they read 'em—are written with bile instead of ink. Never bothers me much though. They're like kids out of school—smart alecks—that's all, showing off."

Not much later, Barry returned, more anxious than he would have admitted, even to himself. He found his mother and his fiancée on the best of terms, and sat down with them to a "real" substantial tea.

Going home, in the car, Jane became enthusiastic.

"She's wonderful! I love her!"

Barry twisted himself about in the driver's seat and eyed his little sweetheart with astonishment.

"That's very gratifying," he said.

"But, Rupert, you didn't tell me anything about

her. Anything real, I mean. You gave me such a wrong impression. She's awfully clever—and young—and strong."

Barry acknowledged the verdict with a nod. He had been, for the most part, solely interested in wondering what effect his mother's outspokenness, her obvious lack of "culture", her drab, solid middle-class surroundings, would have on the daughter of Richard Marlowe. He had, he admitted shrewdly to himself, not allowed for the authentic aristocracy which does not accept people at their face, social register, or Bradstreet value.

Anne was charmed with Mrs. Barry's comment on her work, faithfully repeated by Jane.

"That's simply priceless— isn't it, Lily? We must get her down here. A female Mencken come to judgment. Jane, you've got to produce her. I'll give a bona-fide Village party for her and she'll eat it up."

Barry protested unavailingly and Jane herself was a little dubious, but for different reasons. Barry suspected, and quite erroneously, that Anne's intention was pure malice, that she desired to put his mother—out of dislike for him—into a trying position. Jane, on the other hand, was feeling a little sorry for the Village, exposed as it would be to the sharp eyes, and she surmised sharper tongue, of the guest.

But Anne had her way and certain of the select Village groups were gratified by once more finding themselves invited to partake of the famous Marlowe hospitality, and to meet, as sacrificial offering, a dyed-in-the-wool Philistine. Barry was adjudged very nearly that and from what Anne had said his mother must be plus. They came, therefore, in their most batiked moods and left, at a late hour, feeling aggrieved and cheated. It should have been so childishly simple to score off the spare lady with the impossible straw-derby and the honest, square-toed shoes. Never heard of D. H. Lawrence, my God! Yet the positions were somehow, and not too subtly, reversed. The Village went to its respective bed-divans, very late, with an authentic grievance. It was annoyed; it had been paraded in front of an amused and imperturbable audience, had been put through its colorful paces for her benefit. It felt like the Zoo.

A few privileged souls remained to discuss the guest of honor after Barry had taken her home.

"Jane," remarked Lily Lawrence, "your future mother-in-law is a treasure. A whole comic supplement in herself."

Jane opened an outraged mouth, but Paul Abadie interposed quickly.

"Lily, I think you are mistaken, I liked the dear lady immensely. She has a most keen mind."

Anne nodded.

"She's the real thing. Jane's to be envied. That woman's a tower of strength."

Anne had been treated as an entertaining, precocious and spoiled child by Barry's mother and she had rather liked it.

Lily stretched her lithe, slim length on the couch and yawned, revealing white, pointed teeth and a healthy red lining to her big, well-shaped, painted mouth. She flicked the ashes from her long Russian cigarette with a henna-dyed finger nail, at least half an inch long, and murmured, sleepily and feline-ly:

"Nevertheless, she reminds me of a boiled dinner."

Jane exclaimed angrily and Lily opened her remarkable yellow and green eyes to smile at her.

"Don't be annoyed, Infant. I find your fiancé—charming. Is it necessary to admire his good mother?"

"I suppose not," Jane said, somewhat placated by praise of her lover, "but it wasn't kind. I'm so glad you like Rupert!"

Lily yawned wider than ever. She was having a very good time.

"I didn't say I liked him," she added, with easy malice. "I don't like caviar, either. But I eat it."

Jane flushed and said nothing. Anne drew her delicate brows together and looked at her friend. Lily was but newly returned to the fold. She had been in

Mexico, fashionably accomplishing her latest divorce. Anne had found her less stimulating on her return and Lily was frankly annoyed at the engagement of her very useful friend.

"Must you really marry him, Anne? I can't imagine your doing anything so utterly commonplace. Paul is a delightful boy, of course, and I have no doubt a wonderful lover. But you'll languish in captivity. And I shall lose you," Lily had ended, on a note of intensity.

Anne had been a little repulsed by that. She discovered herself, to her own astonishment, to be as downright and impatient of gesture as any "normal" woman. She had "boshed" her Lily into a sulky, dangerous silence. Since then the friendship had not flourished as formerly, although Lily had written her another Anne-poem, full of veiled forebodings and reproach.

When Jane had gone to bed and Paul had taken his departure Anne detained Lily a moment.

"What did you mean about 'caviar'? I never heard such arrant nonsense. Do you mean to tell me you have any mines laid for Barry? God knows I'm not enamored of him, but he is Jane's property."

"Love does not improve you, Anne. You talk like a motion picture caption."

"Never mind how I talk. I noticed your attitude toward him tonight. So did his mother. And, by the

way, your criticism of her was vulgar and unnecessary. Jane, praise heaven, is blind as any little bat. Hands off, Lily!"

"I was under the impression that you did not like him. Glad to have it confirmed. You'd not be happy then if Jane—or Barry—changed minds, so to speak?"

"I'm not anxious for you to change hers—or his."

They had other words, and parted with no mutual expressions of esteem or regret. Later Anne saw her mistake. It had been very stupid. Lily Lawrence had had no "designs" on Rupert Barry. She was merely physically and mentally incapable of leaving any man alone. A man who belonged to another woman was even better game than one who was unattached. Her obvious flirtation with Barry that evening had meant nothing to her—or to him—as far as one could judge. But now Anne herself had put her on her mettle. She was angry with Anne, had been for some time.

Anne had proven a good friend in the material sense and Lily had likewise basked in the very great admiration offered her by the younger girl. For Lily Lawrence was engrossed in battling her devious way upward from the demi-gutter which had spawned her, and Anne's type, new to her, seemed a solid, permanent ladder. Gifted, unscrupulous, unusual was Lily. She knew Anne's coming marriage would prove a,

perhaps, unscalable obstacle. Paul Abadie did not like Lily Lawrence and showed it, openly, if courteously. He would use his influence over Anne to break, definitely, the friendship.

Lily had made other plans. She had hoped, her inconvenient and inadvertent husband once disposed of, to bind Anne more and more closely to her. She wished to travel. Why not travel as Anne's guest? Jane would be disposed of in some way. But Anne had not written of her own engagement and Lily had come back to the Village to find it an established, conventional thing. It was too irritating, especially as Jane, little fool, was now out of the way.

Rupert! Lily had read him accurately enough. Clever, egotistic, subtle, rather empty. Lily smiled, back in her untidy little flat. She shed her clothes anywhere and anyhow and crawled into a wisp of a bright orange nightgown, shook her dead black hair about her pointed face, and smiled again. She could wait. She was a good waiter. In common with the rest of the recent feasters, Lily had a grievance; too. Unlike them she thought she saw, if dimly and distantly, an opportunity of rib-tickling retaliation.

CHAPTER VII

To Richard Marlowe, nomad, the delayed but eventual report of his younger daughter's engagement brought with it a sore tenderness which he had by no means experienced when Anne's more or less flippant message concerning her own plans had reached him. He sighed, in a vexation of spirit, momentary and unusual.

Jane's exuberant, extravagant cable lay open upon his white drill knees. He replied by cable, wrote, did all the expected and generous things, but did not intimate that he would return to America for these or any other events. He was trying, with what success only he himself knew, to drug himself with the poppy of strangeness; trying to warm cold hands and a colder heart in blazing sunlight, intensely preoccupied in forgetting all that had been and living for the day alone.

His daughters, for the most part, seemed further away from him than the mere physical distance. They were as figments of a dream once dreamed and, in flashes, so vividly remembered that it seemed real. Occasionally and unwillingly he aroused himself to mentally comment on what he termed "his unnatural parenthood." As a parent he viewed himself with a

vague, disapproving astonishment. But he could not, nor did he indeed wish to, conceal from himself that his affection for his three children was wholly devoid of all passion or any amazement. For Jane he had that sudden tenderness and flashes of inexplicable trepidation. In Anne he knew a certain pride, a spiritual irritation that she could be so very like himself and yet—or inevitably—so antagonistic. For Wynne he felt very little, save a certain friendship. He knew none of the awe with which a man says to himself, "This is my son."

Richard Marlowe had no instinct for paternity. His great gift of emotion was a lover's gift. He was as a lover, complete and self-contained. And so, as the years went by, Ethel, his dead wife, gradually assumed the most vital place in his life. If she had wished for her revenge she had it now. Memories he had thought buried, dissipated or erased, crossed and recrossed the shifting screen of his life. They were more real to him than life itself—than death. He grew to know his wife as he had never known her living or during the first years of his bereavement. Little memories wholly physical, a trick of gesture, a turn of phrase, a facial expression, arresting and personal, came back to him. He could not be free of her. And so he wandered with her beside him, meeting people, forgetting people, unaware of beauty, seeking some last and eternal Lethe. There

had been other women. But not of recent date. He could say, and truly, "I have been faithful to thee—in my fashion."

To Wynne he cabled strict directions to return to New York for the weddings. Thus far must *les convenances* be observed.

A physician, a husband, a father, he was a little sorry for his girls. But he couldn't help them. Best stay where he was. It was impossible that, returning, he would do himself or them any good. Weddings were—— He turned aside from that thought abruptly, remembering his own.

So Wynne, lazing about ship on his way over, speculated a little on his father's very explicit request—or, more likely, command—and also, with an idle and not untender amusement, on his sisters' fiancés. Anne's lover, her brother could visualize with some accuracy. She had said so little about him, her infrequent letters had been so marked with reticence that Wynne drew his amiable conclusions. Anne must be tremendously in love this time, when she found no need to explain or defend her choice. But Jane! Since her engagement she had written to her brother at least twice a week. Wynne had been mildly astonished and had thought, with toleration, "I suppose she feels she must slop over to some one," and had, following up that thought, fancied Anne was too concerned with her own affairs, as well

as too natively scornful of sentiment and confidence, to provide an outlet, a safety valve for the younger girl's emotions. In this he was wrong as Anne had never before so beautifully exhibited herself as the Interested Older Sister. Jane's smeary, bubbling letters to him indicated, essentially, a mere, wistful need to draw near her own people in her happiness. Her minute descriptions of Barry, her "he said's" and "he does's" and "he is's" and "he shall-be's" which recurred with monotonous frequency on each page were not illuminating. By their very redundancy they defeated their own purpose and Wynne was left with a hazy idea of Barry and a vague feeling that he wasn't much enchanted with the fellow. This was made more definite by a too-just-right letter from Barry himself.

"God, a Philistine," said Wynne to Anne some days after his arrival, and various trying family evenings—for Aunt Hattie was up for the wedding and there were casual cousins and such dropping in.

"How come?"

Wynne shrugged. Not long since he and Barry had had a conversation about "art". The effect on the artist had been bad in the extreme. The worst of the whole thing was that Barry knew something of his subject. He had a smattering. He was self-deprecatory in a way that plainly showed he was merely trying to engage Wynne's interest and didn't give two

damns one way or another. If he didn't actually say he couldn't draw a line but knew what he liked, he implied as much in less bromidic terms.

"What does she see in him, *par exemple*?"

"What does it matter?" asked Anne, reasonably.

"Nothing, probably. Still—one is curious."

"She loves him. He is clever. He will go far," Anne replied, measured and weary.

With Paul Abadie Wynne was charmed, a not astonishing development. The two men were almost certain to have much in common; the rather simple and ardent poet, the sophisticated, brilliant artist. Paul, who loved his father's country with a love that was pure longing, was sick for a word of the Paris he had not seen in seven long years of exile. He and Anne were going over on their honeymoon. He sickened for it; he yearned to take Anne to all the dear places in which he had laughed, starved and been happy. Anne, who knew Paris geographically as well as she knew New York, was perfectly aware that until she saw it by Paul's side and through his eyes she was still a stranger to a land unvisited.

The weddings were in October. They had chosen an uptown church and an old, kindly rector who had known them as children. Anne was a marvellous bride in a gown of straight white velvet, low girdled in gold. She had cut her pale hair early in the summer and now wore it in a fashion that would have

been destructive on almost any other woman; cut square and unusually, it gave her the look of a medieval page. Her train was embroidered in golden fleur-de-lis and she carried lilies in her arms, white lilies with little tongues of dusty, golden flame. Her face was white but illuminated. Her eyes were almost black. And she walked up the aisle with a carriage at once regal and humble.

Jane wore satin and point lace and pearls—a little cap of them on her red hair—with yards of tulle floating from it. She was beautiful, young and tremulous. Rupert, moved to a rare gesture of poetic emotion, had found the fitting flower for the bridal—white hothouse lilacs, a great sheaf of them, instinct with spring's own breath.

The sisters, unattended, walked up the aisle together to the altar, where Wynne and the bridegrooms waited them. The latter were, as usual, noticeable for nothing save, even Rupert, nervousness. And Wynne lent the proper touch of the super-conventional, acting as deputy for the girls' father, clad in the most magnificent wedding garments.

People whispered along the aisles. It touched them. The sisters. So dissimilar. And they speculated on the curious turn of the wheel that had robbed Gramercy Park with one twist of a whole, established family. Those girls—down in the Village—good thing they married before harm came to them, my

dear. Wynne, so handsome but, really, a little over-foreign, don't you agree with me. And that graceless, fascinating father, off, heaven knew where. Did you hear he had married a Japanese? Oh, a Russian? Well, I knew it was some one Oriental. Not married? Poor Ethel—hush, here comes the bridal procession——

A short, lovely service, superb organist and a quite proper reception at one of the hotels. And then it was over. Mrs. Paul Abadie. Mrs. Rupert Barry—Anne and Jane, married.

CHAPTER VIII

THE wedding was over. Those who had witnessed, those who had trembled, those who had been tearful or inanely beaming as was consonant with their several characters, looked at each other a little blankly. Mrs. Barry, Senior, went home to her flat and removed from her person the stiff gray silk dress into which she had, a few hours earlier, reluctantly inserted herself. She said, absently, as was her custom to the thrilled Ansonia—Ansonia had wept, in the gallery, a darker shadow among shadows——

“Well, that’s that. Funny—a matter of minutes and think of the years, the generations, that went into the perfecting of the moment. Life’s queer.”

Wynne was finding it not queer, but dull. His was the graceless duty of “hanging around” until Anne and Paul Abadie should sail. For they were insistent that Wynne accompany them. He was going back; they were going. How foolish not to make it a threesome. And meantime they were spending a week at a little, lost inn in the Westchester Hills. So Wynne went to friends on Long Island, restless and bored and promptly got into mischief, the old saw being nine times out of ten a true one. His idle hands that itched for brush and palette,

his idle eyes that ached for the dear city of his adoption, led him into a very swift and very ardent flirtation with a young woman as bored with her husband as Wynne with his waiting. From this silken entanglement he was rescued in the nick of time by a mere sailing date. That the lady, over enthusiastic, would up and follow later in the year was something he should have foreseen but did not.

Aunt Hattie went back to Pittsburgh, to her clubs and her platronics, tearful and elated. Weddings did her a world of good. Liking Paul and impressed by Barry, she advertised both her nieces as lucky girls, generously admitting that even Anne might turn out of some account as a wife.

A week or so later the Sunday supplements displayed their usual extraordinary pictures of "Society's latest brides," pictures which caused the slippered, cigared peruser to mutter strange criticisms in which the word "freaks" and such unfinished sentences as "would any sane man——?" and "what's the world coming to?" and "probably have money——" might be overheard.

And the "happy couples"?

Honeymoon is a graceful and hackneyed term that veils so much. Honeymoons *per se* might well be abolished and harvest moons might better be substituted—wedding trips of the ten-year married, for instance. Now and then, in a moon that is blue, life

gives her most golden coin to two, and bids them buy the world. Such spendthrifts were Anne and Paul.

Theirs was all a wild wonder, a magnificent escape from life. Paul was born lover and Anne was a pale star shining in the violet darkness of new knowledge. Eluding him a little, coming back to him always on a foam-crested wave of irresistible seas—or, sometimes a lost dryad beckoning from her green solitudes, laughing a little, yet with eyes serious and intent. Wooed and won, and lost for a day—wooed and won again. Those were perfect hours. For Anne was a poet and Paul was a poet, a man—and not an Anglo-Saxon.

One turns from a terrified contemplation of their personal miracle, the throat tight and the heart fearful, and looks to Jane and Rupert.

They had gone to Pinehurst for several weeks in all the bravery of new trunks, new hand luggage, and battered, honorable golf bags. They were easily the most envied and most courted couple in the hotel, pointed to with pride and the usual good-natured, vulgar half-mockery. Jane was adorable in her sports clothes, her evening gowns, playing the young matron soberly enough. Barry was, as always, impressive.

Rupert and Jane. One thinks of their first weeks together in small, definite words of an unelastic content—tolerance and astonishment, terror and tenderness. One remembers two facts: the first, that Jane

was a normal, healthy young animal; the second, that Barry was an American husband.

Jane's thoughts, incoherent and fleeting, are not unilluminating.

"Happy—so happy—Mrs. Rupert Barry—Mrs. Me. Jane. Not any one's sister. Myself. No, not myself. Rupert's wife—Funny—dressing and eating and golfing—talking to strangers and dancing—using the same words, the same gestures—and everything different—how different? If I could tell, ask Rupert——? He'd hate it—I thought I could talk. Talk it all out—he hates that—funny to go around so everydayly and all the time wonder and question and remember——"

Rupert was content with his wife and deeply in love with her. Already finding her out—not caring—now. Not yet feeling cheated. But patronizing. Always something of the patron in the love of a man of his type. Preening himself a little in her obvious adoration. Attaching adjectives to her, *beautiful, responsive, eager*. Wishing her a thought less naïve, yet aware that had she shown more sophistication he would have been, according to the laws of his nature, uncomfortably dubious. The first naïve phase would pass, he hoped. A man didn't like—a woman should not expect—Good Lord, what a curious upbringing hers must have been! And a wife who showed, thus early, signs of becoming distinctly—he called it

"temperamental" — was disconcerting. Barry was firmly convinced that what he, in "frank discussion," termed "emotion" was a husband's privilege. Wives to be perfect were submissive, chaste and tender. For more startling manifestations a man should seek elsewhere. They were, he thought, professional prerogatives.

But he was happy, and so, wonderingly, was Jane.

It was impossible to have been as alone with him as she wished. People—there were always people.

"Oh, Rupert, can't we get off somewhere—picnic, a luncheon basket—a long walk, just by ourselves? Why must we have luncheon with those dull people?"

"You find them dull?"

"Dreadfully. And so English. I want to laugh when he does. Haw-haw! Just like that. Like something in Kipling. And he drives me crazy pulling the ends of that ridiculous mustache. And that Noah's Ark wife with her eternal criticizing of everything American. I wish Anne could see her."

Rupert was mildly but firmly reproachful.

"You don't understand. Sir Henry——" he rolled it rather, on his clever tongue, "Sir Henry is a very important and brilliant man. A K.C. He can be of invaluable aid to me. I hope, Jane, that you are not going to acquire Anne's way of being sarcastic at the expense of every person who does not meet with her very exacting requirements. You're not married to

a Bohemian. In my profession, and socially, we shall often be called on to entertain, and be entertained by, many people who may not be the best company in the world for you, in a sense of amusement. A lawyer's wife has certain social responsibilities."

"I'm sorry, Rupert."

So they had lunch with the Sir Henrys and Jane was half bored and half inclined to laugh. Such stodgy, uninteresting people. But surely Rupert knew best.

Then they came back to town and she forgot the little question mark in the purely youthful excitement of settling in the new house, of having her old friends to tea, of entertaining Aunt Hattie on a visit, of coaxing Mother Barry to "drop in—there's always a place set," and of writing Anne long, blotted letters which Anne abstractedly read in some heavenly spot on the Côte D'Or, and tucked away in her belt with a half-amused pucker between her brows.

"Anne—what is it?"

"Oh, just Jane——"

Jane's first married Christmas was spent in the little, attractive house. She had her tree, wax-angeled and gold-starred, her stocking hung on the Adam mantelpiece; her narrow, tall windows were flame and forest with holly and pine. She wished

that Anne and Paul might be there. But they would not be home until the late spring. Rupert had been a little—oh, not unkind, never unkind!—but misunderstanding, about them.

“What the devil are they living on? France isn’t the most inexpensive place in the world.”

“Anne has money—an allowance like mine.”

“I see.”

“Oh, darling! Not that, that’s such a wrong impression to get. You can’t quite understand, I think. They’re living simply, not in the big cities, not in hotels. Walking trips, inns, little pensions. Perhaps when they have their early spring in Paris they’ll find a tiny apartment. And then—the rate of exchange is favorable for them. Paul has planned the whole stay so carefully. It is his gift to her.”

“*His* gift! My dearest child!”

“Taking her to all the places he knew and loved. Money isn’t the factor, can’t you see that?”

“I’m afraid not. I didn’t ask you to foot the Pinehurst bills.”

“You don’t understand,” repeated Jane, despairingly.

“Why should I? I’m an American. Don’t think I don’t like Paul Abadie. I do, immensely. It isn’t that.”

No, it wasn’t that. She understood that much.

Christmas morning—after a very special breakfast

and a Santa Claus visit to the kitchen where two trim Swedish maids had been installed—was a whirl of mistletoe, exclamations, tissue paper, crimson ribbon and kisses. Rupert's "important gift" to Jane was a fragile and lovely bar pin of pearls and diamonds, to match the earrings which had been his wedding present to her, earrings which "went so well" with her father's gift, a string of pearls (Anne had their mother's now). Jane turned the pin on her hand and watched Rupert opening his own gifts. He had been pleased with the new watch, she thought. And she said bravely:

"The happiest Christmas. But there will be happier still. Rupert, don't you think that Christmas is really for children? I do. It's only a lovely make-believe for grown-ups. But so real to them."

"I suppose so," he said, absently, and then shouted with laughter:

"Look, Jane, isn't that just like Mother. I never saw such a color. It isn't possible. It doesn't exist!"

He dangled an atrocious tie before his wife's eyes and she laughed with him. But:

"When she comes, don't tell her so!"

He answered, carelessly, "Of course not. What do you take me for? She'll be in for dinner."

"Yes, dear."

But Jane was not thinking of dinner or Mother Barry, nor of the handkerchiefs she had had made

for her, not of the bursting fat turkey, nor yet of the table decorations she had been at such pains to plan—broad silver ribbon and heaped holly and crimson baskets of nuts and raisins. Her mind had gone back to a conversation she had had with Rupert before their marriage. They had been talking of Anne's plans.

"Very pretty. Let us hope their poetic idyll will not be upset by unforeseen intrusions!"

"'Intrusions'?"

He had laughed and quoted the immortal *Gadsbys*.

"'The almost inevitable consequences'. Still, that was a less enlightened age."

She had understood him then, had flushed very faintly and answered:

"She hasn't planned—that."

"Very sensible of her. We won't either."

At this her breath caught, but she forced herself to an expression of blankness, waiting, an almost comically courteous interest.

"You see—of course? It's not a question of money, so much. Of 'affording.' I suppose we could manage. But I am not anxious to be hampered at the outset. I may have to travel, I shall want you with me. Children would be a terrific anxiety, a handicap. And you are very young, my dear."

It had not been vouchsafed to her to realize that, even had she had courage. She had nodded

gravely and Rupert had continued his conversation on a note of relief. Not that he had feared for a moment. Jane was, he thought, intensely modern, and would see eye to eye with him in this matter, would even be grateful for his consideration of them both. Of herself more than himself, he thought in a glow of virtue. He had gone on to speak of his carefully nurtured and quite secret political ambitions. A young lawyer, a clever lawyer, with a following. Jane knew that he was leaving the office at the end of the summer and going in for himself with Wyckoff. Wyckoff had the contacts and the money; he, Rupert, the far sight and the brain. Wyckoff was excellent in mere desk work, digging out stuff, brief work; he, Rupert, was the coming trial lawyer. He knew that. One or two big cases and his future was assured. He—oh, there was no limit to what he might do. A new man, new blood, young enthusiasms, and an elderly caution. He wanted to work hard, to save money, to make himself useful, indispensable to his party. Not that he desired office for himself. He'd always thought that the man behind the throne was the man to be envied. He spoke of certain leaders, great men, of their power over political life and death, the men who made and unmade other, lesser men in the flutter of a dropped eyelash by the signing of a paper. His own cool eyes glowed and Jane forgot the other issue and glowed with him. To help

him every step of the way. But she was a little panicky with foreboding. Was she clever enough? Perhaps not that, as she knew she was not. More particularly then, could she meet his need?

Later one fact emerged clearly. It stayed with her. She never quite forgot it. On this Christmas morning she was remembering again. It had assumed a wider importance since marriage. Jane was a woman who needed symbols, the sort of woman who doesn't take off her wedding ring. The woman who believes in signs.

No children. Well, as she had heard him say often enough, she was very young. She could wait for her babies.

CHAPTER IX

By February Barry had made up his mind that their comparative solitude *à deux* had endured long enough. He began to make his plans to "entertain," not their close friends, but the selected acquaintances who he thought might be of later use to him. Jane found herself emerged in plans for one dinner party after another, and struggled with menus and table decorations and "placings" until her brain reeled. Added to this was the task of keeping Selma and Helga satisfied. They were competent maids and took pride in their work, but they told her frankly that they had not bargained for so much outside company. Washing dishes until midnight, several times a week, that's what it amounted to. This meant, besides oral flattery, a substantial raise in wages, and Rupert was not pleased.

"Ridiculous. Let them go and get others."

"But it's so hard now, dear."

"I can't understand, Jane, why you make your domestic arrangements so difficult for yourself. Other women do not. Mrs. Lane, for instance—that's a perfectly run apartment and she has only two maids. You've spoiled these girls. What have

they to do after all? You have in a cleaning woman, the laundry goes out. I really think you should manage better."

The Lanes—Lane was an influential editor—and others were dining at the Barrys' on the following evening. Even Rupert agreed that it would not be easy to get other service in that short space of time. He grumbled, but gave in. And Selma and Helga were gladdened by an increase of emolument.

By this time Jane had come to the conclusion that Rupert was "funny" about money. That was as far as she went with it. She didn't dare look at it closely. He was funny, that was all.

He was perfectly willing to spend any amount on the house or the table, when it came to a question of properly entertaining or not at all. He liked to see Jane well dressed and urged upon her the necessity for new clothes when, as she pointed out, her trousseau was still hardly worn and perfectly adequate. But he had curious little economies, almost laughable. Magazines. He couldn't understand why she bought them. One or two of the best were all right, but half a dozen? And trash, that's all they were; trash, not worth the paper they were printed on. This grieved Jane, rather, as she loved nothing better than a lazy afternoon or, if Rupert were out, evening, with a dozen or more of the things spread about her. She read them from cover to cover, even pausing a long

time over the advertisements. She had always had a real longing to enter every contest she saw advertised. How many articles in this picture begin with X? Or name a new writing paper. Or last-line a limerick. But she had always been too shy.

Books were another grievance to Rupert. As with the magazines, he approved of the "best," the most standard. He made it a point to read three or four of the most enthusiastically reviewed novels of the year, but wholesale book-buying on the strength of an advertisement or a friend's recommendation did not appeal to him. He considered much reading a waste of time.

He was very eloquent on waste in the kitchen. They bought and served the best and Jane must check up on what remained in the ice-box. Why should the girls have eggs for breakfast? And the way they consumed coffee was an outrage. He gave orders to Jane to make a daily habit of checking-up. Jane, for the first time, did not argue and did not obey. She couldn't go into that kitchen and haggle over two eggs and some spilled flour and a spoiled meat dish with those two decent, self-respecting girls. She blushed with shame at the thought. Jane hated reprimands; she hated to receive them, she loathed administering them. When now and then she was forced to speak sharply—Rupert called it "firmly"—to any of the servants, she was sick with dread

beforehand and knew that her face flushing and her voice shaking would have a very different effect on the reprimanded than her words were designed to produce. So as far as speaking about kitchen waste was concerned—Rupert had suggested that she make a daily examination of the waste-bucket—well, she wouldn't. And from her own allowance she bought the little extras, more coffee, more tea, more butter, and saw to it that the kitchen was satisfied and replete and that, nevertheless, the bills sent by the grocer and butcher to Rupert were not augmented.

It seemed to her a harmless deceit. Yet, had she looked at it closely, it would have seemed less harmless and more degrading.

When Anne came back in the late spring Jane was as glad to see her as if she had been away a year. She had gone down and seen that Anne's apartment was in order after the tenant had left and had planned a day or two in her own house with Paul and Anne as guests so that they need not get in the apartment until everything was "really clean" and some of the inevitable breakage replaced. Anne, writing from Paris, had agreed gratefully to this measure, but Rupert was annoyed. He and Jane had been asked to the Lanes' Long Island place over the very week-end which would see the Abadies home.

"How obstinate you are, Jane! Surely Anne and Paul can exist without you for a few days."

"It wouldn't be kind—not to meet them—and have them here."

"Fat lot Anne will care. Or Paul either. They are perfectly capable of moving right into their place and enduring a minute amount of discomfort for a few days. You couldn't have chosen a worse date."

"I might cable Anne to postpone her sailing," suggested Jane with a rather Anneish effort at sarcasm. But Rupert was too annoyed to notice.

"That's the childish sort of suggestion one might expect from you, Jane. As if your sister ever put herself out for you."

Jane was silent. So much was truth, she supposed.

Rupert went on:

"Now, for the last time, will you or will you not write Anne that we will see her after our return from the Lanes'?"

"I will not!" said Jane, red-headed at the tone in which he addressed her.

Rupert flushed faintly under his smooth, blond skin. He said, evenly, but as angry as she:

"All right. I'll go alone. I don't mean to let this opportunity slip for a senseless whim on your part. Dolan is to be there. The Big Boss. I understand he is looking for a personal lawyer. He's had a row with Tracy. That would be a pretty big feather in

my cap. Tracy was my superior in the old firm. And you'd let this go—to meet Anne and Paul!”

She might have weakened despite her inner convictions, but Rupert's quick announcement of his plan to go alone outraged her. And she said:

“All right—go. I don't care!”

She was at the dock to meet her sister, an agitated little figure in smoke gray, a gallant green feather in her gray straw hat. Her red curls danced along the soft curve of her pink cheek and she embraced Anne and Paul with an ardor which startled them and even herself.

“Small sister.”

“You've put on weight, Jane. It's rather becoming.”

Anne was her cool self, amazingly inserted into some bizarre and becoming French “one piece” and wrapped against a cool spring wind in an Italian officer's cape of powder blue. She was pale and looked tired, but her eyes were clear and shining. She might have been away for a week instead of months for all the emotion discernible in her manner.

“Rupert not here?” asked Paul.

“No.”

“We'll see him tonight, I suppose?”

“Well, not exactly,” said Jane, walking very fast and speaking still faster. “He had to go to Long Island for the week-end—on business.”

They sat on trunks under *A* in the customs shed and Anne looked at her sister.

"Where to?"

"The Ivor Lanes'."

"I see."

She said no word but she understood. She looked swiftly at Paul while Jane was engaged in admiring the supple and beautiful figure of an opera star who was cursing fluently in three languages at the customs men near by. And Paul looked back and nodded slightly.

Anne said, presently, as if no pause had ensued:

"Very modern. Well, let's hope he gets what he's after!" and Jane tore her fascinated gaze from the profane diva to look at her sister with something of wonder in her eyes. Why should Anne take it for granted that Rupert was "after" something? Even if he was?

They went to the little house, eventually, tired out from the talkative struggle with the customs. Jane was resentful. When she and Rupert had first spoken of the Abadies' return, before the question of the Lane house party had arisen, Rupert had told her carelessly that he "knew a man"—and could see to it that the Abadies got through the rites quickly. She supposed that he still "knew" him and that there were such things as pen and ink in the world, even if he, Rupert, could not personally be there. But she

hadn't mentioned it before he left for Lanes'. Nor had he.

Anne approved of the house. She had known it, of course, in its first stages, but now it had the lived-in and loved look. She liked the quiet guest room which overlooked a garden and was cool, but not cold, in tint. After the good dinner Selma served, Paul, at Anne's insistence went out, walking the short distance to his own apartment, to confer with the janitor. And Anne crawled into bed and lay there in black pyjamas, a cigarette in her mouth, cushions heaped behind her, her short, pale hair brushed off her forehead.

"Lord, I'm tired! Jane."

Jane, sitting beside her, looked up. The tone was so strange. Rebellious, resigned, a little humorous—all in that one word, her Christian name.

"I'm going to have a baby."

"Anne!"

"Silly, isn't it? And quite unexpected. Oh, it's far off, don't begin to coo and flutter, for heaven's sake! And laugh if you want to."

"I don't feel like laughing."

"Neither do I."

"Oh, Anne," said Jane, with a little wail, "do you hate it so much?"

Anne crushed her cigarette out in the ash tray and put her long, beautiful arms behind her cropped

head. Her eyes were fixed on the ceiling and her voice, when it came, was thoughtful and uncolored by emotion.

"Hate it? No, not that way. In a measure, I don't mind so much. Dimly, I like the idea. The—well, what it stands for . . . an incarnate expression—But mostly I dread it. I hate the things you have to go through. Not the final part. That's all right. An experience. I suppose no woman is complete without it. Pain's salutary, somehow. But the waiting part and the ugliness—I detest that. And I'm a little frightened."

"No! No! Anne, you're well and strong for all you look so fragile."

Anne turned her head and lowered her eyes to Jane's. In that moment they were kind, even affectionate.

"I wasn't thinking of that, my dear. I don't die easily. I mean, I am afraid of children. Each child an entity. A personality. So hard to cope with. And the hopeless gulf between child and parent. Any one not a fatuous cow must see that. Even the cows have sometimes to acknowledge it. And then—a mother and a lover. Those are incompatible terms."

"Paul?"

"Oh, he's sorry for me, of course. He knew my views. And he is secretly delighted. He's French,

my dear. He has the paternal instinct. He is charmed—but he tries to hide it from me.”

She moved restlessly:

“It’s the end,” she said, brooding; and Jane asked no question. “It should have been you, and not I,” said Anne at last. And Jane nodded.

A few years later she would have wept bitterly at such a statement. Now, married a few months only, young as she knew herself to be, and sure as she was of converting Rupert to her viewpoint, she only nodded and smiled a little.

“Rupert doesn’t want . . . at least not yet. He says I have plenty of time.”

“So you have. At first I didn’t want to go through with it. But Paul was very determined. So I’ll make the best of it, I suppose. Look in that black suitcase, there.”

Jane jumped up and brought the piece of luggage to the bed and laid it at the foot and Anne bent over and opened it, with a key she took from her purse which lay near by.

“Dig in.”

Jane obeyed and her hands came out filled with tissue-wrapped articles — caps, bibs, little dresses. Anne picked one up and spread it out on her hand. She looked at it critically yet half abstracted.

“They do adorable work there,” she said. “I knew, just before we left and so squandered some of

my allowance. We will have to retrench. I won't hear of Paul's taking that beastly editorial job. He must be free. He must write the big things. I would hate him if he got into the muddy, easy grooves of that sort of cheap editing. So—well, all around the baby complicates things."

"But you can write, too," Jane urged, smoothing out a ridiculous embroidered bib.

Anne was silent. After a moment she said:

"I don't want to—now."

Jane wondered. Was she as unhappy as that about the baby? What had happened to Anne, Anne who was always writing? She was a little worried—and a thousand miles off in her guess.

After a time Anne said:

"That's Paul coming."

"Paul? I didn't hear the doorbell."

Anne smiled, not triumphantly but confidently. She said nothing. About three minutes later the doorbell rang.

A little later Jane said good night. She had said wistfully to both of them, Paul sitting on the bed and gravely trying a belaced and beribboned cap over his clenched fist, "You'll have to let me come and take care of the baby."

Anne had answered cheerfully, "If you won't, nobody will, I suppose. It's bound to grow up like Topsy."

Alone in her room she undressed slowly. Odd to be without Rupert. And yet, why odd? She had been without him for a good many years. In a few months to have so completely sloughed off the old skin? It did not seem possible.

She tried to think of him at Lanes'. He hadn't telephoned. That hurt her. He might have.

But she couldn't keep her mind on that. She was thinking with every ounce in her of Anne. Nonsense! She *must* have heard Paul's step or whistle on the street in front of the house. But the guest room faced the garden; no sound of the street save dim traffic sounds reached it. It wasn't possible, a contact like that.

If it were possible, she thought, gropingly, a woman wouldn't need to write. Not a woman who could feel that way.

CHAPTER X

RUPERT went off to the Lanes' in a high ill-humor. He considered himself a very badly used man. He told himself that Jane had made the Abadies' return an excuse for annoying him. She didn't care much for the Lanes. But what of that? Likes and dislikes cut no figure where a man's ambition was concerned. It had perhaps been tactless of him to compare the Lanes' establishment with their own.

The ride down—he hadn't been able to go in Jim Dolan's astonishing car as he had hoped, and that added another grievance—was hot and dusty. Rupert leaned back in the almost deserted smoking compartment and tried to give himself up, impartially, to his reflections. He had a very logical mind but he was discovering that when it came to his close personal relationships it did not run along the smooth grooves in which he had trained it. It kept going off the track, and that jarred him.

Jane! Why on earth had he been so blind? He had fancied when he first met her that she was the rarest of all combinations; a sophisticated mind in an unsophisticated body. His attraction toward her had been, of course, a purely physical impulsion, which he had justified to himself on the grounds that

he was as much in love with her brain as with the pink and white firm flesh of her. She had seemed to him extraordinarily witty, in a quiet way, very keen and sharp seeing. And he had never met a woman like that. Clever women as a rule were all for themselves. A man did well to choose a clever wife, of course, but he had to consider if her cleverness would be used along his lines, and to his ends or merely to further what was, in the last analysis, her own little unimportance in the general scheme of things. Jane had seemed to him quite perfect—a brilliant girl, undeveloped enough to be still moulded by the right man, modern enough to see clear and unmodern enough to believe that the Male is superior.

By the time he had seen sufficient of Anne to realize that a great deal of Jane's verbal sparkle was magpied from her sister, he had been so firmly caught in the toils of the other element that it didn't bother him much. It proved to him, he thought, merely that Jane was adaptable, took on the stronger character's color, in which case, once she was his wife, he could make of her pretty much what he wished.

They had been married a little over half a year and he knew that he had been cheated. Thus he put it to himself, looking out of the dingy windows at the uninspiring scrub-oak landscape. Cheated. For she wasn't adaptable. Not at all. She was a

commonplace, healthy, charming young woman, obstinate and *durchschnitt*-minded.

He'd thought, though, that in the matter of his career she would at least follow his lead. But the very first thing that had come up—this so important house party of the Lanes—had proved to him that she would set her own little fads and fancies above his real necessities. Well, he'd have to make the best of it.

There was no doubt about it. He had been very glad to marry the daughter of Richard Marlowe. That name stood for very much. Money. Birth. Standing, social and professional. Amazing brilliancy. But now that he was married he couldn't see that the Marlowe name had done or would do much for him.

To be sure, he had now a certain entrée. But he could have gained that, eventually, on his own merits. And Richard Marlowe—what sort of a parent was he? Wandering God knows where and with God knows what purpose and in God knows what loose company! Marlowe's reputation had never been too stainless. Going off like that, giving up his profession at the very height of his success, the prime of his life, and leaving his two daughters to shift for themselves—marry and be damned to them—a check, a string of pearls and wash your parental hands. Very funny business. As for

Wynne—effeminate, nervous, supercilious. He'd not enter much into Rupert's life or calculations.

It had all been a mistake. If he had to have a Marlowe he might better have married Anne. Of course, she disliked him and he disliked her. Still she was the Type. Real brain there, real force. An amazing woman. That marriage wouldn't last very long, thought Rupert, maliciously.

A mistake. Yet he loved Jane. He *did* love her. She was an appealing person. There were times when they were alone together and he had her in his arms that every vestige of thought dropped from him. He was simply content to have her, warm and responsive and youth itself. Of course he loved her—in his cooler moments, tolerantly, a little patronizingly, in his more emotional, passionately and completely.

How long would that last?

He said to himself that he would have never faced the issue—or rather, not as soon, if it hadn't been for this miserable business of the Lanes' party. He would have gone on for months, maybe years.

Years. Well, he was married. For life. No matter what sins of omission Jane committed, he was *married* to her. A man in his position, in the position in which he hoped one day to be, didn't go around divorcing wives. They stayed put. They were held up as models. That was that.

He shook himself impatiently and got up, throwing away his cigar. He'd walk through the parlor car and see if he knew any one, if other members of the party were along. But they'd probably all gone down—those who hadn't arrived yesterday—in Dolan's car. That had been a most unfortunate thing, not getting Dolan's ear on that trip. But the case on which he was most occupied had held him until train time. Damn!

In a black frame of mind, he went through the car. The paper boy was monotonously shrilling his wares: "All the new magazines . . . nice, fresh candy . . . fresh candy." The car had a number of occupants, smart-looking women and others not so smart, reading their bright-covered magazines; a few men. No one he knew. As he passed the drawing-room door with an idea of getting out on the platform for some air, he heard his name.

"Mr. Barry!"

He stopped, looked in. He recognized Lily Lawrence at once. She was leaning back in her wicker chair, her small hat tossed on the couch; between her lips, a long cigarette. Her curious face was pale with fatigue.

"Do come in."

He went in and sat down beside her.

"You're alone?"

"Quite. I bribed the porter to let me in here—

after the Pullman man had gone. I wanted some space—and to smoke. Where are you bound for?”

“The Ivor Lanes’.”

Rupert concealed his astonishment.

“Really? How charming. So am I.”

“I know. Mrs. Lane told me.”

“But I didn’t. Why on earth wasn’t I told? We could have travelled down together from the beginning.”

Lily smiled a little and said:

“I didn’t accept until the last minute. I had planned something else. I was to go in the car with Mr. Dolan and the Byrds, but they made too early a start for a lie-in-bed like me.”

“I see. But you should have ’phoned me.”

“Oh, no. Jane doesn’t like me.”

“Don’t be absurd,” said Rupert a little sharply. Why on earth were Jane’s likes and dislikes always cropping up, of late?

“Don’t be evasive. Of course she doesn’t.”

Rupert said nothing for a moment and then replied evenly: “I am sure you are mistaken. Did you know that Anne and Paul are expected today?”

Her long eyes darkened. She turned with a sinuous movement of her body and laid her hand on the arm of his chair. But he felt the pressure, not with any pleasure, but with a stinging, warning sort of discomfort, as if she had touched him.

"I knew. That's why I came away."

"What do you mean?"

"I didn't want to meet them. Anne has treated me very badly, Mr. Barry."

In this instance Rupert permitted amazement to show upon his face and in his voice.

"I am afraid I don't understand."

Lily crushed out her cigarette on the window-sill with a nervous gesture.

"I suppose you wouldn't. But we were very great friends. The only woman friend I have ever had. I adored Anne Marlowe. I had great ambitions for her. I had hoped that—oh, what's the use of talking? She fell as giddily in love with Paul Abadie as any schoolgirl. And thereafter I didn't count. Not an atom. We had—words—before her marriage."

Barry was a little skeptical, but rather sorry for her.

"I see. You don't care for Paul?"

"I do. I like him very much. He hates me, but that doesn't matter. I can always keep my own emotions free of the entanglements of the other person. But I am afraid for Anne. He can't hold her. How can he?"

Rupert agreed gravely.

"No, it can't last."

Her eyes glowed green, jungle-wise. She asked, low:

"You think so, too?"

She became animated and, changing the subject with a shrug, asked:

"Why isn't Jane with you?"

Rupert stiffened a little.

"She wished to stay home and meet her sister and Paul. They are going to be at the house for a few days until the apartment is made ready for them."

"Ah? Then I needn't have run away. What a panicky thing a woman is. But, forgive me, isn't Jane a little foolish?"

"To wish to see her sister?"

"Don't counter. Foolish not to come down to the Lanes' and play the blushing bride as sweetly as only Jane could. Mr. Dolan is a very sentimental, susceptible man, oh, harmless—with Jane's type. But he's up from the dregs, you know. And he hasn't known many young women of Jane's class. She could have helped you."

This time Rupert was amazed beyond all caution.

"What on earth? How do you know—"

Lily laughed.

"I've known the Lanes some time. I know Dolan. I know his *ex-alter ego*, Tracy. Did you know what their quarrel was about? Well, it doesn't matter, I see that you don't. Oh, yes, Jim Dolan and I are old friends."

She knew his ambitions! She was well informed.

Barry looked at her and his heart jumped suddenly. Hadn't he heard somehow, somewhere, that the Tracy-Dolan break had centered about a woman? This woman? Was it possible? He had gathered from Paul that Lily was none too immaculate.

She couldn't make very much with her books. Even poetry as fine as hers couldn't pay. But she dressed very well. And she'd gotten her divorce—the last one. He began to wonder and as he wondered they talked casually of the Lanes, of the latest books, of the last play. Her mind was corrupt, he saw that, but it gave forth light. Like the marsh gas — will-o'-the-wisps. A blue light, flickering, glancing, uncanny, which rises from decay and buried, water-logged things.

If Lily and Dolan . . . ? In that case, he must cultivate Lily. There had been a lady whose name was not unlike his own who had once had the ear of the King. Well, he'd see.

Lily said, suddenly:

"You're not listening. And I'm sleepy. Go back to your chair and let me take a nap. But be sure to call me!"

As he left, she called after him mockingly:

"Better not tell Jane. Bridegrooms have to be wary."

He was conscious of a dull glow of anger against her. But it didn't matter. Nor did Jane. If Dolan

had to be reached by a woman—he thought Lily liked him. She had certainly singled him out at that abortive party Anne had given for his mother. Embarrassingly so.

Lily did not sleep. She sat erect and thought. Things had played nicely into her hands. How she hated that dough-faced little simpleton, Jane. And Anne. One could strike at Anne through Jane. That was an amazing thing; she'd only recently learned it. Her thoughts see-sawed, balancing.

Lily had tremendous influence with Jim Dolan, the leader of Barry's party. The man behind the throne. She had met him some years ago. His crudeness had been attracted by her super-finish. His slow and solid mind by her glancing wit. He had been easy. Oh, she hadn't given him anything—and she didn't intend to. He wasn't hard to keep dangling. Irish. Sentimental. Sort that wept at the moving picture when the white-robed child rears up in the fever bed and says, "Daddy, love Muddie!" to soft music and the sobbing, recently estranged parents. That sort. And she could play him for some time yet on the "I am a Good Woman" theory. He couldn't marry her. There are some things even Power may not do. This was one of them. Lily with her lovers and her two divorces.

But she had influence. She could cast it either way she wished. Which would hurt Jane more? To

have Barry lose all his chance with Dolan? Or to see Barry furthered in his ambitions?

Which?

It lay somewhat in her long hands. Which way would she cast her vote?

She lay back, smiled, closed her eyes. She had made up her mind.

CHAPTER XI

THE Lanes lived not far from the town of Sag Harbor. Their house, a stone affair, low, with a red-tiled roof, stood on the top of a bluff and looked down on a curve of white sand and a sparkle of blue, protected water. The house was approached by a long, cedar-bordered driveway and the whole place had about it that air of luxury, combined with unostentation, which had taken unlimited money, good taste and stern restraint to produce. Other less fortunate people, aiming at the same result, succeed only in a blatant advertisement of their bank-account or a sleek obsequiousness of grounds and buildings which is even more distasteful to the weary beholder.

Here Jenny Lane and her three small children lived for nine months out of the twelve; here Ivor Lane, her husband, week-ended, or snatched a brief summer vacation. He was, perhaps, one of the greatest of the country's editors, a brilliant man, very shrewd and likable. He had inherited large means and had made a fortune as well. He had married a well-known actress who had left the stage and had settled down to having babies and interesting herself in local charities. They were an unusual and charming couple.

A car had been sent to meet Lily and Rupert. When, at the end of nearly half an hour's drive, they reached the house, they found only their host and hostess, as the Dolan party had not yet arrived. Barry listened with inner annoyance to Mrs. Lane's prettily expressed regret that Jane had not accompanied him. But he made out a very good case for Jane—even better than the one he had telephonically conveyed. He drew a quite touching picture of the meeting, after a long parting, of the two sisters, and Mrs. Lane was interested and sympathetic. Presently she carried Lily off to her room and Barry was shown his by a manservant.

While the man unpacked his bags, got out his dinner clothes and ran the water in the adjoining bath, Barry stood at the three great windows overlooking the water and watched, idly, the play of the afternoon sun and shade on the lawns, on the horseshoe beach. Gulls dropped screaming from a cloudless May sky. Across the water he saw an orchard foaming rose and cream. The lawns of the Lane place were as emerald, as cropped and smooth as putting greens, and there were great, scattered blankets of spring flowers. The light glittered on the roof of a greenhouse and, after a time, it looked to the deluded eye like a pool of pale water—or a blown soap bubble.

Dignified, beautiful, expensive. Barry drew a

deep breath. This place was the expression of his own ambitions. He "did" very well. He could afford a small, charming house, a small, charming wife and two resident maids—a far step from the flat-days of his boyhood, when the El. roared by the windows and children screamed in the street and in summer the wilted leaves of dejected trees swirled idly in a dusty, hot puff of wind—orange peels, clamor, dingy lace curtains and a sour-smelling respectability.

A far cry, indeed. But he was not satisfied. He must get on, up. He must be able, some day, to smilingly welcome his guests in just such a house as this one. In just such a wide hall. With just such a correct manner. Ease and brilliancy and an effortless, impressive way of making a man feel at home.

"Your bath, sir," said the cat-footed man behind him.

"Gad," thought Barry, lying relaxed in the warm water, which was slightly and virily scented with some piney essence, "with an ambitious wife to back one up——"

He left the thought unfinished.

When he joined the others in the wide, double-fireplaced living room and accepted a cocktail, crystal-caged amber, from the butler, he learned that the Dolan party had come. Mr. and Mrs. Byrd, the novelist and her banker husband, and Jim Dolan—

and his secretary, Andrews. Lily Lawrence, lying full-length on an immense lounge, laughed lazily.

"Jim couldn't move hand or foot without that valuable young man," she said, and added, thoughtfully, "But he's quite presentable."

Jenny Lane raised a smooth, blond eyebrow:

"Quite delightful, you mean," she said. "I like him very much."

Lily, who didn't, shrugged carelessly. She knew that she was not endeared to her hostess. But she knew, too, that Ivor Lane, who had taken a good deal of the credit of "discovering" the poetess, admired her sufficiently to override any quiet objections his wife might have to her intimacy with the family. Ivor Lane had a deep and authentic feeling for poetry. For the woman herself he felt no emotion, either of friendship or indifference. She was to him only the fleshy instrument of her delicate and rather bizarre art.

The Byrds came in—Mrs. Byrd, Eva Winton, fat, handsome, voluble, well-dressed; her husband, tall and emaciated, trailing behind her with the set, flattered look upon his face which men, married to geniuses, painfully acquire and which becomes second nature to them.

After they were disposed of and their cocktails had reached them, with the thin slices of melba toast and caviar, Dolan came in, the stocky, eager-

faced Andrews at his heels. Dolan made straight for Lily Lawrence, tossing a word to Barry, whom he knew slightly, over his shoulder.

"Lily—and why didn't you come in my car?"

Lily gave her hand into his heavy, slightly damp clasp.

"I couldn't. Mr. Barry and I came down together, but we didn't discover it until we'd nearly reached Sag Harbor," she said, and added, "You are looking well, Jim."

"Think so?" Dolan expanded his great chest and ran his short fingers through an immense shock of iron-gray hair. He was a very striking-looking man. He had a broad, red face and eyes of a wintry, penetrating blue, an ugly, broken nose, a great square chin, broken by a deep dimple and a mouth which betrayed him. A mouth almost beautiful, curved and gentle and sensuous. His body was huge, he towered above every man in the room and one did not at first notice his curious disproportionate, too short legs and arms.

"I've been up to Mulqueen's," he confessed. "Go there twice a year, you know. The fellow runs the beef off me, makes me eat slops and grass, hoe potatoes and weed the lawn and charges me about fifty a day for the privilege. His abuse is thrown in free, I suppose."

His wandering eyes caught Barry's quiet, listen-

ing expression and he swung slightly around in the chair he had drawn close to Lily's couch.

"A little touch of that would do you good, young fellow," he boomed. "You're pale. Got that city pallor. I can give you twenty years, I bet, and still beat you to the tape. How about that, Lily?"

Dolan was pathetically proud of his really great strength. He was also worried to death about himself half the time. He had a tendency to high blood pressure, full-blooded man that he was. And every now and then some expensive doctor put the fear of God into the dynamic Irishman and he dieted and sweated and kept early hours for a week or two. He was always asking his friends if he didn't look well? If they didn't think he'd cheat the devil yet and live to be as old as his paternal grandmother had. "One hundred and six and two months and every tooth in her head her own, rest her soul!" he would say.

Rupert agreed.

"I believe you. I'm not much good, I suppose, although I try to keep myself fit—golf, a little tennis."

Dolan snorted.

"Kid games."

The Lanes and the Byrds were talking at the other end of the room. Lily broke in:

"Rupert — Mr. Barry — was sorry not to have

driven down with you. Sorrier than I. I hate motors, Jim."

"So you do. Well, I was sorry too. There was room and to spare, God knows. I didn't know you two were old friends."

Rupert had stiffened and wondered a little at the sound of his Christian name on Lily's lips. He heard her answer now, lazy and low:

"Not in terms of years, maybe. But we have mutual interests. I'm very fond of Rupert's little wife, Jane. She was Jane Marlowe, you know, sister of Anne Marlowe, who is my dearest friend."

Dolan was interested.

"Anne? I remember her—a wee blond thing with a body like a whiplash. Clever girl. And wasn't she the daughter of that Richard Marlowe—who, by the same token, must be your father-in-law, Barry?"

"Yes."

Dolan broke in, laughing immoderately and slapping his fat, over-manicured hand on his knee.

"That's a great man. I'd heard he was the finest medical fellow in the city—the state—maybe the country. I don't know. I didn't stop to inquire what his line was. I thought to myself a doctor's a doctor and can treat a cat in fits or a man with gout or a woman in childbed. So I went to him and sent up my card. He kept me waiting, I tell you. When I went in he looked me over and my card too, and

he says to me, quiet, 'Is it your wife who is ill, Mr. Dolan?' And I answered him, 'Hell, no—wife I have not. It's me that's sick with this and that and vertigo and a roaring in my ears. What's your price and where's your prescription?'

"There was a pop-eyed nurse in the room. I disremember her name," Dolan went on, getting more and more Irish, "and her he waves to one side. And he lays back in that great chair of his and puts his fingertips together and looks at me. He says, 'I don't doctor real men, Mr. Dolan, God help me. I doctor women. Hysterical, silly women with an ailment for every hair in your head. That's my business. They call it by a fine, resounding name but I call it other. And so, I'll give you some advice and not charge you the penny for it, for it's a relief to see a man in this office again. You go home and you drink lots of water; go light on the red meats and eggs and cut down on smoking and coffee and on the drinking too. Go up to Mulqueen's a couple of times a year and sweat. You'll live to be a hundred, if that's any joy to you!'

"So I thanked him and we had a cigarette together and I went home. As I left by that wee side door he had, a woman came in from the waiting room. A skinny girl with too much paint on her face. I heard her say, 'Oh, doctor!' hysterical and pleading. And I heard him answer with a different voice from the

one he'd used to me. So I took his advice and damned good it was too. He's a great man, your father-in-law. Where is he now?"

"I've never seen him," Rupert admitted. "He's been abroad for some time, since long before I was married."

"Well, if your wife's inherited the brains of him, you're a lucky man or maybe you aren't according to the way we look at these things."

Lily smiled faintly.

Dinner was announced and they went in. After it was over the women went into the living room for coffee and liqueurs and the men stayed at the table. Byrd engaged Lane in a discussion of some matters of foreign exchange and Dolan hitched his chair, clumsily, nearer to Barry's.

"You're a lawyer? Yes, I know, Lane told me. But Lily Lawrence was telling me a while back how clever you are." He paused and said solemnly, "There's a wonderful woman," and lapsed into a sort of maundering reverie.

Barry, with a sudden, curious chill along his spine—so *Lily had been "boosting him" so soon—and why?*—said evenly:

"Miss Lawrence does me too much honor. Yes I'm a lawyer."

"In for yourself?"

"Practically. I've a partner, a clever fellow."

"What was your original firm?"

Barry knew that Dolan knew—Lily had told him. But he answered, without surprise:

"Merton, Tracy & Young."

Dolan's face darkened. He said abruptly:

"Tracy, now? You knew he did my work—personal work, you'll understand. He had an arrangement with his partners."

Barry shrugged.

"I'd heard something."

Dolan looked intently at the younger man. He saw the cold eyes, veiled with caution, and the resolute set of the handsome mouth. He was no tyro at reading men. He summed Barry up in his mind, rapidly and accurately.

"Clever as hell—close-mouthed—ambitious. He's burning up with ambition. Unscrupulous, a little. But with the right man to back him up and keep a tight rein over him—Lily's right, by God!"

Lane rose. The men followed and they went into the drawing room. As they crossed the wide hall Dolan put his heavy arm across Rupert's shoulders.

"Leaving Sunday night? I'm staying on a day or two. Come see me—say Wednesday evening—at my house about nine? I'd like to talk to you."

Barry stepped into the living room conscious of the triumph at his heart. Lily was at the piano run-

ning her long fingers over the keys in an idle manner. He went up to her presently and, leaning, looked down at her.

"Your friend Dolan has been very amiable," he said, smiling. "I'm to see him at his house on Wednesday night."

Lily rippled another chord or two. She was looking amazing in a sheathlike gown of some dull purple color which left her arms bare and closed severely about her throat. Her black hair was braided about her forehead. It lowered above her pale, wedge-shaped face in which only the long eyes and the painted mouth lived.

"Yes. I thought he would ask you. Your chance. Be very careful. Let him do the talking."

On his side then and without an effort, really, on his part! He said, lower:

"I think I've you to thank for his interest."

"Me? I have no influence." Her smile gave the conventional denial, the lie direct, and she looked up at him swiftly.

"Nevertheless," said Rupert, "I'm grateful."

"If you persist in your delusion, suppose I ask for proof?"

"Ask away!" said Rupert lightly but conscious of some uneasiness.

She crashed her hands on the piano. The thing sang and shook. She said, so that he could hear:

"Persuade Jane to like me a little. Let me come to your house sometimes. I am so lonely and Anne is wrapped up in Paul. I am a very desperately unhappy woman, Rupert Barry—and—will you let me warm my cold hands at the flame of your happiness? I've always liked Jane—have had such tenderness for her."

She broke off. The long green eyes were full of histrionic tears. Rupert was undeceived. He knew the tears for what they were. But he could not for an instant fathom the woman's motive. He said, however, with a praiseworthy eagerness:

"But, how absurd! Of course you must come. Often. And Jane would be the first to want you——"

She took her hands from the keys, smiled once and then flung them into the most blaring jazz melodies of the day. Mrs. Lane, behind her, said, "*My dear Lily!*" and Dolan, leaving the mantelpiece on which he had been leaning with Byrd, lumbered across the room.

"That's the stuff, Lily. Something lively."

Barry relinquished his place to the big Irishman and crossed the room. He sat down beside Mrs. Byrd and mechanically complimented the novelist on her most recent book. His heart and brain were in a tumult. A little careful treading and he knew he would become Dolan's personal counsel. And Lily?

Why had she furthered this? How had she fathomed it? What was her motive?

He did not like her. But she fascinated him a little. She had power. He loved power. She had more power than he at the moment. That thought was unpleasant and persistently he wondered why and at what price this sudden, unmistakable patronage.

CHAPTER XII

ANNE was to get into her apartment on Monday, and the Sunday preceding Mrs. Barry, the elder, marched into the house of her son to call on her son's sister-in-law. She liked Anne. There was something gem-hard and clear-seeing in the girl which appealed to a similar quality in the older woman.

She listened to Anne's sketchy account of her months abroad with few comments, the hat she had refused to take off pushed to the back of her round head, her thick gray hair framing her weather-beaten, fine face. Once she said, amazingly:

"Some day, when I'm too old to hurry, I'm going over there to one of those lazy countries and just sit in the sun."

Anne nodded.

"I can understand that. There's something leisurely in Europe which frightens and attracts the American. Even in London City, if the men get to their offices by ten, it's a miracle. And they take plenty of time for lunch. And tea at four—in the office or out of it—and then they call it a day until tomorrow."

"How on earth do they get their business done?" asked Jane.

Anne shrugged.

"I don't know. But they do. As long as all the others employ the same methods no one would be catching extra worms by turning into the proverbial early bird, would he? Paul and I have talked things over. Some day, when we have enough money to invest properly, just enough to give us a little income, we'll go over to France and buy a little place and live. Really live."

Jane exclaimed miserably:

"Oh, *Anne!*"

"Don't fret, Infant, the day's far off, as yet."

Mrs. Barry asked abruptly:

"Where's Rupert? Not at the office—Sunday?"

Anne looked at Jane a moment and Jane answered:

"Oh, no. Didn't he tell you? He's gone to Sag Harbor—to the Lanes'."

"Humph!" said Rupert's forthright mother. "Yes, he did tell me he was asked down. But I thought he wouldn't be going—as you didn't."

"I told the child she shouldn't have put off the visit for us," Anne said lazily.

Jane demurred, two scarlet flags flying in her round cheeks.

"No—no—I didn't want to go. I couldn't go with you coming, but of course Rupert had to. He didn't

want to either," she said, with real gallantry, "but it was very important."

Mrs. Barry nodded grimly.

"So he told me. Some politician to be soft soaped, I gathered. Well, that's Rupert. He'll have his way, regardless. But you'd better go with him next time, Jane."

There was a little silence. Jane felt aggrieved. Not against Rupert's mother but against Rupert, for putting her in this position. Anne, Paul, Mrs. Barry—all had reminded her that her place was with her husband. Mrs. Barry, well and good. But why Anne and Paul? They'd always laughed a little at the woman's-place-is-where-her-husband-puts-her theory. It was too bad of Rupert to create the situation, she thought.

She went into the pantry to speak to Helga about some tea. Anne and Mrs. Barry regarded each other; Anne lying full-length on a couch, a cigarette drooping from her hand, Mrs. Barry, bolt upright in her chair, pushing her hat back still further in a gesture of unaccustomed uncertainty.

"Hope I didn't rile the child," she said, and added, "But it's too bad."

Anne waited.

"I mean," said Rupert's mother, "that Rupert's wife, in order to get along with him, has got to be one of two types. The first is an absolutely ruthless

woman, probably with a great deal of money, stronger than he is, who would make him walk her particular chalk line. The other is a perfect barnacle, a clinger, not as hard as a barnacle, say—I suppose the old ivy comparison is the best. Wide-eyed. Who'd sit around and say that everything he did was super-right. And what's more, who'd *believe* it!"

"Jane's neither one nor the other," said Jane's sister.

"I know. I'm glad of it, for myself. I wouldn't have cared much for either of those problematical daughters-in-law. Jane suits me right down to the ground. Pretty and commonsensical and with a nice little will of her own, but——"

Her voice trailed off into silence. Anne watched the ash lengthen, gray white, with a slender point of flame, on her cigarette.

"French cigarettes are vile," she murmured, reminiscently, and then said, "I'm going to have a baby."

"That so? That will be good for you," said Mrs. Barry, without astonishment, and added, "I'd rather it had been Jane."

Anne nodded, but said nothing, for at that moment Jane came into the room, followed shortly thereafter by the tea wagon and Helga.

Rupert came home Sunday night. He was in a high good humor, had forgotten all his annoyances,

his grievances. Jane, who had braced herself for a recital of his wrongs, to hear that he hadn't had a good time because she hadn't been along, was instantly irritated. The pendulum of the matrimonial humor often swings this way, or, as Anne said later to Paul, "Married people are like the man-and-woman who tell the weather. When one comes out of the house of ill humor the other goes in!"

Rupert was effusive in his welcome of the Abadies and apologetic that he hadn't been on hand to meet them and see them through the customs. He seemed much gayer, much lighter in his general tone than any of them had ever seen him. After their late dinner he carried Paul off to the little library with him, ostensibly to hear all about the trip. "If I ask you here," he laughed, "Anne will always be interrupting. When a man's married he has to resign the platform."

Going to bed Anne said to Paul:

"What did Rupert want to talk to you about?"

Paul laughed.

"Oh, his successes at the Lanes'. I'm afraid I didn't attend. Some man he met—influential and all that. He's rather above himself about it."

"Politics?"

"I believe so," yawned Abadie. "I pay little attention to these things. They're beyond my feeble grasp."

Anne said swiftly:

"Jane won't be happy. She hasn't the ingredients for the proper political wife."

"And you have?" Paul teased her.

"Oh, yes," said Anne, serenely, "and I'll use them—for you."

He drew her into his arms.

"Home tomorrow," he told her, "and back to the grind. How will you like a husband that sets off every morning to an office?"

"I liked our gypsy life better," Anne assured him, "and I can't bear to have you in the office forever stifling your artistic conscience. But it won't be for long."

"What have you up your sleeve?"

"Nothing but my arm."

She exhibited it. He kissed the soft inner curve of the elbow.

In their bedroom Jane was airing her grievance.

"You seemed to have had a very good time without me."

Rupert answered carelessly:

"Not as pleasant as if you had been with me." He was striding, coatless, about the room, his even pallor flushed.

"Jane, it's the beginning!"

"Of what?" said she, wilfully misunderstanding. He stopped short.

"Well, if you don't take any interest."

"I'm tired," said Jane.

Some time in the zero hour Paul spoke to Anne.
"Hate to wake you."

"I wasn't asleep."

"I just remembered. Lily Lawrence was at that house party of Lanes'."

Anne sat straight up in bed. A dim shape beside him. He could not see her, but he put his hand out and touched the warm vitality of her side. She said:

"That's—unfortunate."

"Don't worry, darling."

At almost the same moment Jane had awakened. She rolled over sleepily and touched Rupert, curled close to his side. For comfort. She thought, frightened: "Why, I didn't even *like* him a little while ago. How dreadful! But I do love him. He's all I have."

She was terrified to realize suddenly the insistence of marriage. Your own people didn't count, not really. They couldn't help. There were just two of you. Ishmaels against all the world. The world against you. Shut in. And if you took a blind step, you bruised yourself.

Rupert turned, lazily, and slung a heavy arm across her. It fell across her breast and lay there, ponderous, a burden. Yet her heart seemed a little lighter for it.

In the morning, she said, very sweetly:

"I'm sorry I was so cross last night. I was really glad you enjoyed yourself so much and that you and Mr.—what was his name?—got on so well together. But I was tired, and I had missed you."

"That's all right," said Rupert, magnanimously, but he did not avail himself of her opening. He only added, "*Dolan*. I wish you'd remember names," and went into the bathroom to shave. He might have sat down and told her all about it. He knew that she was waiting for just that. But, damn it, a man had his personal dignity! She hadn't been interested last night. Well, he wasn't interested this morning. You couldn't regulate your enthusiasms to your wife's moods. A woman had no business having moods, anyway.

She had wanted to tell him about Anne, but she didn't. Not until later. And when she did she chose an unfortunate time.

The Abadies moved into their apartment and Jane was over there all day for three days, helping them get settled. She loved doing it. Anne was looking badly, complained, a little mockingly, of being tired. Jane was glad to unpack for her and to look about for a maid. "Some one who likes babies," Jane had specified, and was as pleased as a Columbus when she discovered just the person, a comfortable South German, with a light hand at cake and a broad, motherly face.

She was "half dead" when she reached home about six on Wednesday and found a telephone message from Rupert carefully written down in Helga's curious English.

"Mr. Barry not come home dinner. He eat club and be home late. Mrs. Barry not sit up."

Jane sat down in a heap, the piece of paper between her fingers. She remembered suddenly that tonight was the night that Rupert had told her marked his engagement with Dolan. Quite sensible of him not to come home, she supposed. But she was so tired and she had such a queer, unhappy feeling. She didn't quite place it, but it needed petting, she knew that much. There's an amazing amount of curative in a little spoiling.

Rupert came in about one o'clock. He was in highest spirits. Jane was sitting up in bed, reading, and he forgot he had told her not to wait. She glanced up as he entered the room and came to the bed, where he sat down and took her into his embrace.

"On the crest!" he told her. "Dolan and I had a very satisfactory talk. He has given me a case to handle. A personal matter. Not very important, but it's the beginning. He's asked me to do one or two things for him and he's coming here to dinner next Monday night."

"That's fine," said Jane, trying to meet his mood.

She added, with an attempt at great sagacity, "I suppose your fee——"

"Fee?" he broke in and laughed. He took a check from his pocket and showed it to her. It was for two thousand dollars. "That's my retainer. But the money isn't the thing, Jane. It has nothing to do with it."

Jane kissed him in silent congratulation. She didn't know what it was all about, but whatever it was had pleased Rupert enormously.

She said, after an interval:

"I've been meaning to tell you. Anne's going to have a baby!"

That roused him from his abstraction. He stared, whistled, and then laughed.

"She is! Our clever Anne! Well, more fool she——"

"Oh, Rupert, don't say that. She's *quite* glad about it I think, although she doesn't say much and Paul is delighted."

"He won't be so delighted when he has to walk the floor nights," said the Delphic Rupert, his mind furnishing him further food for laughter in the form of comic-supplement visions. "Not Paul. Well, who'd have thought of it. I hope it isn't going to put any notions in your head!" he added, with an attempt at humorous sarcasm.

Jane said, seriously:

"It did, though, Rupert, I do wish——"

He frowned.

"Don't be silly, Jane. This is a very important time for me. I shall have to do a lot of entertaining and I want a presentable wife. Dolan suggests we take a cottage near him this summer. He always goes down to Good Ground—he's a place there. I'll probably be in town a lot and we won't get off until July. I'll live at the club and week-end down there with you."

Jane cried, in panic:

"Oh! Can't I stay in town, too?"

"Nonsense. You'd be ill. Besides I can't have people saying I can't afford to send my wife away. No. You'll go down to Good Ground and make yourself agreeable to Dolan's guests. I shouldn't wonder if he'd ask you to be hostess for him. Speaking of hostess, I've asked Lily Lawrence to dinner on Monday. That is, I've told Dolan she'll be here. You'll have to invite her, of course. Here's her telephone number."

He searched in his pockets, ignoring Jane's amazed "*Lily Lawrence!*" and produced a card. He fingered it and then returned it to his pocket again.

"No. On second thought, you'd better write her a nice little note."

"But—Lily Lawrence—where on earth does she come in?"

"She's a great friend of Dolan's," Rupert explained, patiently. "She was at Lanes'."

"You didn't tell me!"

"My dear, you showed no very great anxiety to hear anything about it."

After a moment, Jane said:

"I don't like her, Rupert. She was horrid to Anne."

"To Anne? That's how much you know about it. She is simply devoted to Anne and Anne has neglected her ever since she became engaged to Paul. Lily's terribly cut up about it."

"I didn't think you liked her, either," said Jane, bewildered, trying to forget the easy way in which Rupert had said, "Lily." Of course she knew this was an era of Christian names on short acquaintance.

"I don't, particularly, but she's useful. Now please don't let your prejudices outweigh your diplomacy. The Lawrence woman has a great influence over Dolan."

Jane was rather agreeably shocked.

"Do you mean that—she——?"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Jane, be a little less middle-class minded! There have been men who have had deep friendships for clever women before this. It doesn't necessarily come down to a sex relation. It's not the first time a man has depended on the mental stimulus of a brilliant woman friend."

"The divorce courts are full of them," Jane murmured.

"That sounds like Anne," he said sharply. "I hope you're not going to get into her way of looking at things. It's all right with her. She looks the part. Is. But it's not becoming to you. Or natural."

He got up and started to undress, and Jane said, after a period of inner rebellion:

"If you'll leave me the address, I'll write Lily in the morning."

He tossed the card on his dresser and replied, briefly:

"All right."

As he drifted into sleep his mind was full of pictures. Dolan striding up and down the hideous red leather and oak library. Dolan waving his cigar at the sport prints on the wall. Dolan with the cut-glass decanter in front of him. Dolan saying, "If you serve me well, my boy, I will serve you." Dolan speaking of this man and that man in high office, off-handedly, as one who should say, "I made him." On Dolan's desk a great, silver-framed picture of Lily.

Well, Jane would write Lily. Tractable little thing, Jane, after all. He needn't have worried. She'd fall in line. What woman could resist being the wife of an influential man—of a potential Dolan?

CHAPTER XIII

THERE are two kinds of women. One, annoyed with its man, does its best to spoil a particular pleasure for him. The other redoubles its effort to please and outdoes itself so that the erring male shall feel properly coals-of-fired. Of this latter type was Jane. Her note to Lily was restrained cordiality itself, and she spent days planning her dinner party. They should have a jellied soup, after the pretty green and red appetizer; they should have wonderful broilers, fresh asparagus, new strawberries and many other little delicacies. It comforted her pride somewhat to set before her guests—Lily in particular—one of those “simple” dinners, perfectly served amid all the pleasant fripperies of fine linen and the high lights of crystal and silver. On the table she had yellow roses in an ancient silver bowl and tall, jade-colored candles burned, unshaded, a clear golden flame.

She was regardful of her appearance. One of the prettiest, least worn of her trousseau frocks came to light. A delightful taffeta, cool jade, to match the candles, with a tight little bodice, and flaring skirts over pale yellow stockings and heelless strapped sandals of black velvet. At the round of her slim waist a flat yellow rose pointed its moral.

Her red hair was piled high with a deliberate carelessness, and her blue eyes took on green tints. Her face was flushed and her red mouth curved. Rupert, passing through the room on his belated way to shave and dress, caught her up, ruffles and roses and all, and kissed her a number of times with enthusiasm.

"You look—lovely!" he said. "How impressed, how envious the Great Man is going to be!"

He released her and went into the dressing-bathroom. Jane stood quite still. Must Rupert really measure her by Mr. Dolan's standards?

She looked at the diamond watch winking on her slender wrist. She had dressed early, the table was ready, she had seen to the finishing touches. It would be an hour before Lily and Dolan could arrive. Rupert, she knew, would employ almost all that time bathing and dressing. He was a slow adorning of his person, very fussy and meticulous. She looked again at the watch and did a mad thing—caught a dark cape from a chair, took her latchkey, whispered a word in Helga's ear when she met her on the way to the door and, slipping out, sped as lightly as any fear-spurred Cinderella down the street, under the Arch and eventually knocked, panting at the Abadies' door.

Paul answered, napkin in hand. He looked amazed, as well he might.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. I can just stay a moment. I must see Anne."

He followed her slowly into the room where the table was set and Anne had risen from a high-backed chair. Jane asked, dropping the cape:

"How do I look?"

"Like a red-headed jonquil," said her sister serenely. "What's the matter?"

Paul was in the room now, making extravagant compliments. Anne's level eyes regarded the younger girl thoughtfully.

"Well?"

"Nothing. I had to come. This dinner——" Jane gave herself a little shake and said, incoherently, "I'll feel like a marionette with Rupert to pull the strings. Best bib and tucker for His Highness. And Lily Lawrence to make catty remarks. I—dread it. Anne, couldn't you and Paul come over after dinner?"

"We could, but we won't. We wouldn't fit in—exactly. Jane, stop wringing your hands and shaking. You are ridiculous. Dolan's a nice, common Irishman and Lily Lawrence is a woman in a book. She isn't even real. And in a few hours it will all be over."

Anne's words were almost indifferently said. But her eyes flew a challenge. Her eyes said, "You

won't let yourself down, Jane," and Jane gulped and kissed her.

"I—I'm an idiot. I wanted to come where I would be regarded as a human being—not as a convenience," she said strangely, giggled childishly, flung her arm around Paul's waist and was gone before either of them could move.

"Name of a name!" remarked Paul, sitting down again and looking stupidly at his salad. Anne looked at him with shining eyes, but her brows were bent in a crescent of doubt.

"'As a convenience,'" she repeated thoughtfully, and as her husband said nothing she added, "Rupert Barry isn't as clever as he thinks he is, and Jane—" She broke off and shrugged. Then she went on, "Well, she'll have to work it out herself." After a minute, she remarked, "If we have a girl I hope she'll be like Jane."

"She'll be a boy," said Mr. Abadie, calmly, "just like you."

Jane was back at home; she inserted her key, whisked off her cape, hung it in the hall closet and emerged from the dining room, apparently unruffled, just as Rupert came in.

"Where were you? I called——"

"I didn't hear you," said his wife, truthfully, and looked back over her shoulder at the table, "Doesn't it look pretty?"

"Very. Did you get limes?"

"Yes, dear."

"Has Helga put out the Barcadi?"

"I think so."

Rupert disappeared into the pantry and was presently heard demanding cracked ice. Jane wandered into the living room and sat down in a low chair, her feet on a footstool.

"What ever possessed me to go to Anne's?" she was wondering. But she was glad she had gone. Nothing had been said, no important word had been uttered, but she felt gay, somehow. Anne's eyes had been so confident. Jane said to herself, "We're Marlowes."

That was a talisman against Dolan, the Irishman; against Lily Lawrence, sprung from heaven alone knew what secret garden—dunghill, corrected Jane's brain, to her astonishment. It was a talisman against—Rupert.

This thought frightened her. Why had she thought it? A talisman—and why did her brain correct her again—a *weapon*, against her lover?

A few minutes later she was shaking hands with Dolan and smiling at Lily. Lily looked amazing. She wore a gown colored and patterned like a leopard skin and heavy golden hoops swung from her ears. She was startling in the conventional setting. She would have looked at home on a divan in some

scented, shut-in studio. In Jane's drawing room she achieved a theatrical effect.

Jim Dolan bruised Jane's hand with his heavy clasp, driving her rings into the tender flesh. He said heartily, looking, she thought, like a pig at a raffle, in his evening clothes,

"Well, well, this is mighty nice. Glad to meet you, Mrs. Barry. But Barry didn't tell me he'd robbed the cradle."

Lily added, caressingly:

"Oh, Jane's a great baby." She smiled impartially on Jane, Rupert and Dolan as she sank into the corner of a tub sofa and looked lazily around the room. She remarked, still smiling, "How delightfully—bridal. All shiny—new. Charming. I congratulate you."

Helga came in with the frosty glasses and passed the tray.

"You don't indulge, Mrs. Barry?" asked Dolan.

"No," she shook her head, "I'm saving up excitement against my old age. I don't need any stimulants now."

"That's Anne's argument. What a faithful parrot you are, Jane," Lily declared.

Dolan alone did not perceive the sting, and remarked:

"That's good. I like a woman who doesn't drink. And a woman with religion. It suits them."

Lily flushed a little, and he looked over at her.

"No offense intended, Lily. And none taken?"

"My dear Jim," she said lightly, "I should be very distressed if you lumped me with 'women.'"

Dinner was served.

A good dinner. Dolan ate with the single-minded purpose of a heavy man who loves food. His broad face grew very red and once he laughed and loosened a button of a starched waistcoat. He asked heartily:

"You don't mind? Must do justice to your dinner, Mrs. Barry."

She thought him dreadful. Big and loud voiced and blatant. He said several things that wounded her fastidiousness. She thought, amazed, "Funny how you don't mind some things when the *right* people say them. When the wrong people do they're just vulgar and disgusting."

Lily was bored. Or at least seemed so. Now and then she would laugh a little and say something, low, to Rupert. Or to Dolan. She ignored her hostess as much as possible. She acted a little as if she had been asked to a doll's tea party. It was a dreadful dinner. Only Dolan enjoyed himself. And that was due solely to the food.

Later, in the living room, he sat down by Jane and spoke of Rupert:

"You've got a very clever young man," he felici-

tated her, "and he'll go far in this world or my name's not Jim Dolan." He put his big hand on her knee for emphasis and added, "And you'll help him. A good wife's half the battle, you know."

Jane was conscious of his attempt at friendliness, but the mere physical consciousness of his hot hand on her taffeta-sheathed knee blotted out any gratitude she might have felt. She answered at random and thereby let a chance slip by.

Lily, watching, said to Barry:

"Look at our Jane and Jim. She's disgusted. She is trying to get away and doesn't know how. Can't you possibly explain to her that the man doesn't mean anything by it? Look at her shrink. She'll have to control her features and emotions better if she's going to help you with Dolan. He isn't used to having people retreat before him when he means to be cordial."

It was a very good thing that the Abadies came in. Anne had been restless all through the rest of their dinner and when they sat down to read later, she was more so. She jumped up at last and said:

"Let's see Jane through this," and had on her wraps before her husband could answer.

They rang the bell now and came in on the heels of Helga's announcement.

"Mind if we break up the foursome? I got so I couldn't stand looking at Paul another minute, nor

he at me!" announced Anne, without any truth at all.

Jane was on her feet, flushed and eager.

"Oh—how nice."

Introductions. A shifting of the group. Lily said to Anne, offering her her cigarette case:

"Nice to see you. I suppose I needn't flatter myself it was to see me that you came, however. What's the matter? Afraid I'll contaminate little sister? Or that poor old Jim will? You look wretchedly."

She added something else and the color came up under Anne's clear pallor.

"That is—excessively offensive," she said. "If you must be coarse, Lily, I'd prefer that it wasn't at my expense."

"Brides are very sensitive," her erstwhile friend assured her, laughing a little.

After a time, in which more coffee was brought for the new arrivals, Anne suggested bridge and managed cleverly, so that presently she and Dolan were paired off against Rupert and Lily, while Jane and Paul sat by and watched them.

"It was dear of Anne to come after all," said Jane.

Dolan and Anne were laughing over an absent-mindedness of their opponents, Rupert was defending his play with all the eloquence at his power, and Paul's answer was unheard by the players.

"She'll always come when you need her."

Jane said, humbly:

"I know. I didn't use to think so. You're awfully happy, aren't you, Paul?" she asked, with an unconscious wistfulness.

"Awfully," and passed into silence, watching his wife through the smoke of his cigarette. Presently she shook her bent head a little, as if his regard was a burden that oppressed her but not unpleasantly, looked up and waved her hand to him.

"I'm playing rotten," she announced, "and I'll thank you to take my hand after this rubber. I've lost about sixty-two cents and the family finances can never stand that."

He understood her little quick glance at him and when the rubber was over he relinquished his place beside Jane to her.

Anne said:

"It's going very well. Dolan is quite charmed by your ménage. I'd be a little nicer to him, if I were you."

"He's terrible. He reminds me of a policeman."

"Policemen are useful and sometimes very nice. Dolan isn't bad, Jane. He's tragic. Don't you see it? So much power. And so much force. Wanting so much to be with, one of, the 'best people.' And he can't. That's why he's taken up Rupert, primarily. There are dozens of young men as clever as Rupert who will serve his ends as well. But he

likes Rupert's background. Can't you see that?"

"Why do he and Lily——"

Anne shrugged.

"Lord knows. She's over-subtle. He likes that. She's super-everything. That attracts him, too. And down underneath she's as common as he is. He knows it and so does she. Also she is a creative genius. He can understand that, although not what she creates. He is one, too, in his way. He manipulates men; she manipulates words. They have a lot in common, those two. And he's the finer."

Jane nodded, but she said:

"He—*paws* one."

"He would. He doesn't know any better. Don't let it alarm you. It's his way of making friends. Like an awkward puppy, I think. I'm going to get him over here by you. Be as nice as possible."

Anne pulled the strings and after a time Jane found herself by Dolan. He expressed a wish to see the house and she took him all over it. He was enthusiastic over her bedroom.

"That's what I like to see. No new-fangled notions. These notional twin beds have broken up more homes."

His hostess was glad that only one light burned in the room. The—creature!

But she tried to be "nice." She spoke of how happy Rupert had been to meet him at the Lanes'.

"I can do a good deal for him," Dolan assured her, ponderously, and for you, too. I hope you feel friendly toward me, Mrs. Barry. I like young people. And it's fine to see them in a home like this. I'd like to come often, if I may."

She was really moved. She put out her hand with a sudden, impulsive gesture. He was saying, as if to himself:

"Everything so—fine. Quiet. That's what I like."

"Please come often," said Jane.

He took her hand and nearly dislocated it, but she was gallant and made no sound. He said, heartily:

"I sure will. You won't mind if a lonely old fellow drops in and takes potluck with you, sometimes. No airs, mind? No party business?"

"I'd love it," said Jane.

But she found it a little harder to be sincere when he began singing Lily's praises. She realized that in order to keep the man's patronage—that was what it amounted to—she must suffer Lily gladly.

When they had all gone and she and Rupert were alone, she watched her husband walk restlessly up and down the room.

"It went off very well, you've made a hit with Dolan," he told her. "He was quite enthusiastic about you, when he spoke to me before leaving. As I thought, he will want you to be hostess for him at the Good Ground place. Lily, of course, can't be, much

as he'd like that. But he practically asked me if we would have her down for a time."

"To visit?"

"Of course."

"Rupert, I *couldn't*."

"Jane, please try and control your dislike of her. I tell you it's important that you should see a great deal of her."

"Of Mr. Dolan's mistress?"

Barry went cold with an anger which he himself found disproportionate to the cause. He said, with a weariness more effective than profanity:

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Jane!"

"It's obvious, isn't it?"

The weariness broke. He shouted, savagely:

"No, it is *not*! I sometimes think that so-called nice women have the most evil minds in the world. Why do you persist in putting such a construction upon the situation? Do you think for a moment that I would ask you to receive the woman if I believed that."

Jane interrupted him with a weariness as great as his had been. She sounded faintly puzzled. She said:

"That's just it, Rupert. I've been wondering—if you would."

He turned and went up to their room in silence. She said to herself, sitting there, clasping and un-

clasping her hands in the gay taffeta lap, that she had been a fool. He'd been happy about the evening and she had ruined it for him. She'd make it up to him. Tell him she was sorry, that she liked Dolan—he wasn't so bad, after all—that she would try to like Lily, if Lily was of any importance to Rupert.

She visioned her life—a long life, with no privacy in it. It would be like a house, in which all the doors were open, through which aliens like Jim Dolan, with his heavy hands and red face, would crash, clumsily, and perfectly at home; through which Lily Lawrence would be free to wander, smiling dimly, padding, like a great cat. She saw herself trying to escape, to shut the doors, to lock them. But Rupert had all the keys. And he would open to their guests.

After a time she followed Rupert to their room. He was sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER XIV

JANE MARLOWE BARRY was dining alone. She often dined alone since Rupert had been sent up to the Assembly. She seemed to see him less and less often as time went on. She looked across the table with its flickering candle light at his empty chair. The maid who had replaced Helga a year or so ago moved deftly about the room and the snow thudded monotonously on the pane. Jane reflected that she would be sorry to leave this house. She had lived in it for seven years, ever since her marriage. She was twenty-eight. Twenty-eight. And Anne was thirty-five.

She said to herself, restlessly:

"It isn't very bad out. I might go over to Anne's. I wish I'd thought to go before Janice was put to bed."

She rose from the table, lighting a cigarette. Jane had been smoking for some time now, rather too much, and walked into the living room and lay down on a sofa with the latest novel, uncut, at her hand. But she did not read; she closed her eyes and gave herself up to a consecutive looking-backward. She'd not done that for a long time.

Jane Barry at twenty-eight was a beautiful

woman. She had put on weight, which became her; her hair and skin were as freshly radiant as they had been the day of her marriage, she dressed in an excellent, conservative taste. But her face had lost its earlier, youthful betraying mobility, the play of light and shadow which had given her a naïve and rather touching charm. Only Janice could call from her now those pictorial, shifting displays of emotion which once had marked her.

She said to herself now that she felt old.

She looked back to the first summer at Good Ground. Even now it was a nightmare to her, a nightmare of bewilderment and blundering. They had taken the cottage and she had been installed there. Rupert had come for a month's vacation and for week-ends. She had thought to have him all summer, as courts were closed, but he seemed to be occupied with vague business for Jim Dolan. Dolan, whose great stucco palace looked as if it had been transplanted from Coney Island, was more in evidence that summer than Barry. Jane had "hostessed" innumerable house parties and dinners for him. She had also had Lily Lawrence with her for six terrible weeks.

She never forgot those weeks. Lily Lawrence had managed to relentlessly confuse the younger girl's clear thinking. She had reacted to the woman's sophistries and cynicisms and crass brutalities of

speech as a sensitive mind reacts to some starkly revealing book on certain phases of physiology. Impossible to think "All people are not like that. These are abnormalities." Lily allowed for no such comforting explanation. She seemed to think that nothing was abnormal but the normal. She imputed motives, she implied causes, she argued logical effects. And even Anne, coming down for a week after Lily had left, couldn't efface from the sore surface of Jane's mind the impressions.

"My dear, don't listen to her. The woman is warped. Dry rotted. She sees everything in this world through spectacles anything but rose-colored. I don't say that it isn't good for you to face a fact now and then—you've told yourself fairy tales long enough. But these aren't facts—not Lily's."

"She makes things seem so inevitable."

"What, for instance?"

"Have you ever heard her talk about marriage?"

"Yes. When a woman has made a failure of two legal marriages and a dozen or so other relationships, she is in no position to draw conclusions. She's biased. On the same count a man who has known a hundred woman cannot speak as authoritatively about Woman as he who has lived with one for fifty years. She is the clue to all the others, after all."

To Paul, Anne said, sombrely:

"What a fool I was to have been blinded by Lily

Lawrence's genius. This present situation is all my fault. Do you think that Rupert is seriously attracted by her?"

"No. Dolan uses him; he uses Lily—or thinks he does. And Lily uses them both."

"But why, why? What has Jane ever done to her?"

"Nothing. Except be herself. Young. Unspoiled. Happy."

"She won't be any of those long. No, it's my fault. Lily hates me and she strikes at me through Jane."

Anne was not to be consoled. She was thoughtful that summer, oppressed and a little melancholy. For this her physical condition was partly to blame.

It was a difficult summer for them all.

In the following winter, Anne's daughter, Janice, was born. A good baby, healthy and placid, much the same sort of infant her aunt had been. Anne adored her in a rather startled way, cared for her herself and scarcely allowed any one to touch her save Jane. Anne knew that Jane had a "light hand with babies." Anne herself was of the nervous type of mother and had Janice not herself been of so serene a type of infancy she would have suffered.

Rupert. Rupert, now serving his second and last term in the Assembly. He'd be Police Commissioner next, Jane supposed. Then the roads would lead to Washington.

Once she had asked Anne, curiously:

"Anne, just what does Rupert do for Mr. Dolan?"

And Anne had answered, briefly:

"Makes himself useful, I daresay."

Jane had been useful, too, in another way. If Rupert despaired of ever making of her the Perfect Political Wife, he at least was comforted for her spiritual and mental limitations by her considerable financial help. For, in the second year of Jane's and Anne's marriages, their father, Richard Marlowe, had died of an obscure fever in Egypt. Wynne had been with him, had met him there for the winter season. And Wynne had brought the body back to America.

The daughters of Richard Marlowe went through the conventional motions, save that they did not wear deep mourning. They stood in Trinity with their correct morning-coated husbands, with their even correcter husbands, and each thought her own long thoughts. Jane felt a sorrow that was, for the most part, pure tradition. A wrench. A curious feeling of uprootedness. She hadn't known him very well; certainly she had seen very little of him, but this man had been her father. Anne, musing over the raw, open grave, into which a shaft of early spring sunlight struck like a triumphant sword, was gravely happy. She had known him best of all. He had not only been her father; she had been his child, very like

him in many ways. And she remembered her mother. She thought deeply, formlessly, and later said to Paul:

"I'm glad he has gone. He wasn't a whole man, just a brilliant sort of a shell. He's gone, I think, where he can be made whole again."

Paul said:

"You didn't use to believe that——"

"Ah, but," Anne told him, picking up the sleepy, rosy baby and facing her husband, her eyes blue and dark looking at him over the small, faintly downy head, "when you've a dear lover you must think that. Otherwise——" she made a little gesture with her shoulders and Paul took his wife and daughter into his arms.

Jane had been there, talking to Wynne in a corner of the living room, which had been cut in two to make a nursery. She heard the words and she saw the gesture and she wept bitterly on Wynne's shoulder. She had thought she wept for her dead father.

Wynne had stayed only a short time. The estate was in good hands; he was anxious to get back to Paris. The sisters came to the conclusion that Wynne would never marry. His life suited him so well, he seemed to enjoy the perils of bachelorhood. He had just escaped by the skin of his handsome teeth from the lady whom he had met in a house party on the occasion of his sister's double wedding. He had

had his hands full extricating himself from her sympathetic personality—and, once it was over, had joined his father in Egypt with a sigh of relief and a vow to be more discreet hereafter. He had said as much to Richard Marlowe and Richard Marlowe had laughed. Now he would laugh no more.

There was a good deal of money, fairly divided between the three children. Wynne altered his life very little and his sisters altered other lives, one voluntarily, the other without volition. For Anne put a part of her capital into that brown-covered magazine which had since become so successful. A dreamed-of magazine which was believed in and worked for and made a reality by a handful of clear-seeing people who lacked only the money. And Paul, released from his tragic duties as editor of the commonplace, became an editor of the artistically important. Anne did that for him, not only with her money, but with her belief. And he was free now, he need have traffic with none save freemen.

Jane's money enabled Rupert to forget that he had to practice law for a living and to go up to the Assembly with a light heart.

Jane tossed her cigarette away and got to her feet. No use going to Anne's. They'd probably have people there; Janice would have been in bed long since. She might as well go to her room and try and read this stupid book.

She said good night to the maids and left the living room. She slipped off the little frock that so well suited her and stood a moment looking absently at her reflection in the glass. She was, as usual, in perfect health, clear-skinned, clear-eyed, firm-fleshed.

As she wrapped a silken kimono about her and adjusted her reading light, she observed the meticulous appearance of the room. No disorder. The bed turned down, the silk comforter heaped at the foot. She lay down on hers, piled the pillows in back of her and looked across the width that separated her from Rupert's counterpaned bed. She thought of Dolan and smiled a little. He hadn't been in the room since the change had been made.

Rupert—always so abstracted and busy. Home so rarely and since last fall always so tired, needing so much sleep. She shook her head, frowned a little and, picking up a pencil and notebook, began to draw a table arrangement for the dinner the Rupert Barrys were giving next week for the New York Senator who had been so friendly.

CHAPTER XV

JANE walked down Fifth Avenue on a sunny spring morning, minded to drop in upon Paul at his offices in the West Fifties. Looking up from a deep abstraction, she found her path barred by the tall figure of a man. The man said, hat in hand and the sun shining down on his sleek brown hair:

“*Well*—Jane Marlowe!”

She looked at him a full moment before she knew him. But how absurd. He hadn’t changed much. Very little. Added weight perhaps and a touch, entirely premature, of silver at his temples. She exclaimed, “Roger Weston!” and held out a gloved hand.

“Going anywhere? May I come, too?”

He did not wait for her answer but turned, and fell into step beside her.

“I never see you any more since your wedding—except from a distance. Does that man of yours keep you locked up?”

“No. How silly you are! What have you been doing?”

Roger pulled his good-looking, good-natured face into a doleful grimace:

"Nothing. Nobody. Diplomatic service for a time. But when my father died I came home. In business now, Jane. You wouldn't like a nice little Rolls Royce or a cunning little Isotta for practically nothing, would you?" he wheedled comically, as they walked up the street together.

"Why, yes—I'd *like*," said Jane, thoughtfully, then she laughed, a gay little laugh that took Roger Weston back many seasons and echoed, a little achingly, in his heart. He felt himself becoming sentimental. It was spring, and every man is entitled to a bit of sentiment in the spring. "Oh, Roger—your first car—that wasn't a Rolls or a what-you-may-call-it—but it served."

She was sorry an instant after, for he said, quite soberly:

"Not as well as I would have liked."

A moment later he asked:

"You'll lunch with me?"

"I was going to get Paul," she said, and explained, "Paul Abadie, my sister's husband. You remember Anne? Of course, you do. She's gone off somewhere today with her little girl, Janice. As a matter of fact they are spending the day with my mother-in-law, who has moved out on Long Island, so I thought I'd pick up Paul at his office and make him give me lunch."

"Please include me, too," he pleaded, "and let me

give the party. It's been years. I have so much to ask you."

He wanted to ask, then and there, *Are you happy?* This seemed to him suddenly the most important question in the world. Certainly, she looked happy. Clear eyes—he had forgotten how blue!—clear skin, shining, coppery hair, a little darker than he remembered it, red mouth curved up at the corners as if resting between smiles. Yes, she looked happy. But one never knew, with women.

Jane nodded.

"All right," she said, "that will be fun."

They walked along talking of people they had known. They spoke with the surfaces of their minds. Beneath the lazy ripples and shallows of a conventional conversation, the waters of thought ran deep and dark and swift. Jane was thinking:

"Rupert won't mind. Lunch with Roger. Funny, I used to think it dreadful for a married woman to 'lunch out' with other men. But—all the times he made me go—alone—sometimes the only woman with half a dozen men—or with Lily. Dolan and all his friends. Alone with Dolan, too. Rupert not there. If I can lunch with his friends, I can with my own. Roger hasn't changed much. He is really attractive—older but just as nice. I wonder if he remembers—anything."

She looked at him under her lashes while her

tongue went on answering questions. "Dolly Sander-son—oh, married, divorced, remarried—she lives in England. Didn't you ever run into her?"

She felt for the man at her side the absurd, undying sentiment, silly and fragile and pretty as a paper-lace valentine, that women must always feel for the first man who paid them the compliment of loving them. Roger Weston—and her first proposal. Fan—she had not written Fan. What had become of Fan now, wondered Jane. It had been five years since they corresponded. She must write her. Silly, to think that many of these school friendships lasted.

Roger was gossiping about people she hadn't seen in years. His pleasant voice ran on. He swung his cane a little, talking fast and amusingly. And Roger was thinking:

"Gad, how pretty she is. All these years. Prettier than ever. What was it I heard about that husband of hers? Clever as the devil, ambitious—what was it I heard? A woman? No, I must be mistaken. No man on earth married to Jane Marlowe—I wonder how Anne turned out? Used to scare me stiff—that poet chap she married—I wonder if it is the same. His name was Paul—or wasn't it? I wonder if Jane remembers. Damn the brother-in-law anyway, I want to be alone with her."

When they reached the dignified offices of "Parnassus" Roger remained in the waiting room, idly

thumbing the latest number of what he mentally classed as "highbrow stuff—over my head." Jane was admitted to the editorial sanctum. It occurred to her, as Paul rose, that he was looking very tired.

"Paul, we've come to take you to lunch!"

"We? My dear, how lovely you look!"

"Roger Weston and I." At his glance of astonishment she explained, hastily, "An old friend. I haven't seen him in years—met him walking. I told him I was coming to fetch you, but he insisted that he would lunch us both."

"That's very good of you," said Paul, smiling, "but I can't, Jane. I have an engagement down town which I must keep. Very dull and stuffy and all that, but part of the day's work. Run along with your Roger. By the way, where is Rupert?"

"In Washington. He had to go down."

"I see."

"Anne and Janice are at Mother Barry's. Janice wanted to go down and watch the incubator!"

Paul's tired face lighted wonderfully. He smiled, a little secretly, to himself and answered:

"I know."

Jane said, impulsively:

"You aren't looking well, dear. Does your head ache again?"

"A little. It doesn't matter. Eyes, probably."

Jane forgot Roger, waiting outside. She settled more firmly into the armchair by the big desk. It was quiet in Paul's office. A small room, beautifully furnished. On the shining desk a vase of daffodils. And pictures. Two of Anne, alone. One of Anne and the child. Jane questioned:

"Tell me—that indigestion—last week. You saw Dr. Masters?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

Paul's dark face flashed into amusement.

"Trying to catch me out? You were there, with Anne, when I reported."

"I know. But—you couldn't tell Anne if anything were *really* wrong, could you?"

Paul looked at her. "I suppose not."

"Tell *me*, Paul."

"Indigestion. Jumpy nerves. Diet. A little slow on the work," said Paul with deliberate brevity.

Jane rose and kissed the top of his head.

"You make me tired. Old clam. Come on out and meet Roger."

Paul followed her into the waiting room and made himself smilingly, a little wearily, agreeable for a few minutes. Then Jane and Roger left and Paul went back to his office to stare at the picture of his wife. He had no engagement down town. But he couldn't go to lunch with Jane and see her anxious eyes on

him. She hadn't been intuitive as a girl. Apparently, the quality had recently developed in her. Masters had said—oh, well, a man lived for years with angina pectoris. Of course it hurt like hell. He couldn't tell Anne; she would worry herself to death. And Anne hated sickness. She shrank from it as from something unnatural and ugly. It made her pitiful. She despised being made pitiful, so she became impatient. When Janice had been ill—not often and not alarmingly—Anne hadn't been any good at all. Jane had come in, before they got nurses. Jane. Jane had mothering little ways. He couldn't face them, and her candid eyes of anxiety.

Masters had said a man lived a long time with that at his heart. Masters must know. He was the best man in town.

"Awfully nice fellow, your brother-in-law."

"Isn't he? Every one likes Paul. He's fine. I wish you could see the little girl and Anne."

"Has she changed much?" Weston asked.

"Anne? Oh, very little. She's lovelier looking, really. She has marvellous health for all she looks so fragile. Great endurance, I suppose.

They reached the Ritz. The Japanese Garden was open, this late spring season, and they went upstairs and sat down at a little table and watched the flowing of the funny little stream and felt cool and contented and happy. They ordered; Roger

was very particular and changeable and Jane laughed at him a little.

"I'd like to meet your husband."

"You must come to dinner. He isn't home much, nowadays. At first he was in Albany all the time. Now he's in Washington half the week."

"I see. He's tremendously clever isn't he?" said Roger, a little wistfully.

"Yes."

Ferns and flowers, a tinkling stream, birds singing. Birds in cages. Jane felt very sorry for them.

Roger said, awkwardly:

"You haven't any children, Jane?"

"No."

Her voice was cold, a little. He blushed painfully, as men of florid skin do. He wished he hadn't asked her. But she hadn't seemed to notice his confusion. He said, hurriedly, to change the subject.

"Do you never go to Easthampton?"

"Oh, yes—in cars. We've summered in Good Ground for several seasons now."

"Good Ground?" His eyes laughed into hers, his lips dared. "Do you remember—with me—in the little old car—on the way to Canoe Place?"

Jane tried to look severe. But she laughed instead.

"Yes, I remember. Oh, isn't this iced coffee *heavenly*? Of course I remember."

"You broke my heart," he assured her solemnly, "and once again, later. Ain't you shamed?"

"Not very. And I haven't any proof anyway. You look very fit and self-satisfied—oh, I'm *not* being insulting—and as if you had recovered."

He replied, gravely: "I haven't married, Jane."

"Well, I don't dispute that. Why did you leave the Diplomatic Service?"

He shrugged.

"Too much politics. Wasn't cut out for that kind of a life."

Jane said, musing:

"How clever of you to realize it. So few of us do. Until it is too late. What kind of a life were you 'cut out for'?"

Weston made a vague gesture.

"Oh, lazy—and not much thinking in it. Golf and a club and a fireplace with a big chair at it. A car or two and some horses—and town for the season, maybe. I'm following that plan to some extent, anyway, and feel fairly—what was the nasty thing you called me?—self-satisfied. But as I'm a bachelor there's a good deal missing, you know."

Jane said, a little breathless:

"Oh, how unambitious of you! Yet it sounds rather nice. I have always wanted to live in the country."

"Why don't you then?"

"Rupert prefers town."

"Rupert? I thought you married an American husband."

"So I did."

"Doesn't sound so. In Europe they're always telling us how meek the Married Men of America are. Falling in line and all that sort of thing."

"There are exceptions," she assured him, her smile a little too bright.

When they parted, Jane was to call on some one uptown and Roger was catching a train. "I'm always catching trains. I've become the Constant Week-ender," he said. "I'll see you again?"

"Indeed, I hope so. Please call me up. And come for tea. And we'll have Anne. She'll want to see you again."

Weston doubted, inwardly, the veracity of that statement but replied with conventional fervor. He held her hand a moment, a moment too long.

Jane, headed uptown in the taxi, diverted her thoughts from the insanity of her driver by letting them dwell on Roger.

"Awfully nice—a little dull, perhaps—but so sort of safe and sane, somehow. Heavens! I hope I've a card in my bag in case I'm killed. Surely he had to see that truck; it's bigger than all outdoors. I don't suppose Rupert will like Roger."

As the taxi drew up in front of the apartment

which was her destination, she said, suddenly and audibly, to the astonishment of the driver who had opened the door for her and was waiting:

“What if he doesn’t? Why on earth should it matter—*now?*”

CHAPTER XVI

RUPERT was home a day or two later. "Something" had gone well in Washington. He looked handsomer than his wife had ever seen him and he had brought her a pearl and lapis "trinket"—really lovely earrings—and told her how good it was to be back. They dined alone and he frowned down the suggestion of asking anybody in to bridge.

"No—not tonight. Let's have a quiet evening here. It was hot in Washington, regular summer weather. Seems cool here by contrast. What have you been doing?"

"Nothing much. I met Roger Weston a day or so ago. We had lunch at the Ritz. I wanted Paul to go along but he had another engagement."

"Weston? Do I know him?"

"I think not. I used to know him before I was married."

Rupert looked at her. And she was well worth looking at. She wore the deep shade of blue he liked best to see on her, her lovely hair was waved back from her forehead, her radiant skin showed to advantage under the shaded lights of the living room. Rupert's heat smote him a little. Not much fun for

her, poor girl—he was away so much. Still, if Jane were different—more—well, more pushing in a tactful way, he would be glad to take her about with him. And it was for her that he was working, was it not? For her that he climbed, teeth set and hands sometimes raw from gripping the uncertain ladder? She had no kick coming, when all was said and done.

“How are Anne and the kid?”

“Very well. They were at your mother’s recently. I want to go down on Sunday—drive down.” Jane had a little car, her Christmas present from Rupert. “I thought perhaps you could go with me.”

“Sunday? I wish I could. I’ve promised Dolan to go off with him on some stag party or other. Week-end.”

“I see.”

He frowned.

“I don’t think you do—from your tone. I’m really very sorry, Jane, to have to be away so much. But it can’t be helped. One doesn’t carve out a career for oneself just by sticking to the hearthside, you know. You must have known when you married me that I was ambitious—for us both.”

“Have I complained?”

He was fair.

“No—not in words.”

She said, a little tired:

“But what is it *getting* you, Rupert?”

He jumped up from the sofa where the two sat side by side and stood before her by the fireplace. He looked so well, she thought. She let her eyes rest on his eyes, on his smooth skin, on the fine lines of mouth and chin. She felt, with a sudden despair:

"Why—I don't care any more—not much, that is."

She paled a little at the thought and shrank back in her corner. Rupert bent toward her, one arm along the white mantel.

"If you mean in cold cash—very little—as yet."

"That's unkind. I wasn't thinking of money."

"I know. As far as position is concerned—perhaps not much either. I expect to make the city job this fall. After that—a place in Washington. One doesn't jump into these things overnight."

Jane had been reading "Parnassus" of late. She had been listening to people talk. And now she said, with a certain childish scorn:

"No. But I don't understand your association with Jim Dolan. You—an educated man. I *can't* understand, Rupert," she went on, "just what you think you gain from being his—his—henchman."

Barry stared a little. Then he laughed.

"I am very valuable to Dolan," he said, quietly.

"I suppose so. You've been sort of a lobbyist, haven't you? Going around and getting votes? Passing bills—or helping to pass them. Bills he is

interested in—that have to do with spending the government's money?"

"Whom have you been talking to? Paul? I suppose so. That magazine of his is a ridiculous thing. If he and his editorial writers know so much about politics, if they can run things better than the men now in command, why don't they get out and do something? All their talk amounts to very little."

"I haven't been talking to Paul. I do read his magazine. I think it is sound. Perhaps I don't know much about these things. I knew nothing of your activities for Dolan. You told me nothing. Lily was the first to explain."

"Lily?"

His face darkened with a rush of angry blood. He came back and sat down beside her, took her hand in his.

"Don't listen to Lily. Lily has a grudge—"

"Against you?"

"No, against Dolan."

"What do you mean?"

He was at a loss for a minute. Then he said, with a sudden gesture:

"I hadn't meant to tell you. You and Lily have been good friends. No, don't interrupt me, I know what you are going to say. That's all right. Perhaps I did encourage the friendship. Well, I do so no longer."

Jane said, shrewdly:

"Lily and Mr. Dolan have quarrelled."

Barry shrugged.

"It was inevitable. Lily Lawrence is no longer very young. Nor Dolan. She—she wanted to settle down, it seems. Her last book went very badly; people thought she was losing her grip. Said so. And she was. So she went to Dolan. Wanted him to marry her. An absurd thing. She knew he couldn't. Then she tried to make trouble."

"Trouble?"

"Well, she has letters from him over a period of years—the foolish, thoughtless letters a middle-aged man sometimes writes. And she threatened him—breach of promise. I am telling you this in the strictest confidence, Jane."

"When was this?"

"Quite recently."

Jane looked at his sombre, intent face and caught her breath a little. There was something so ruthless about this man she had married. She said, stating a fact rather than asking a question:

"You got the letters for him."

"Yes. Yes." He seemed to be talking to himself. "It was not very difficult. It was unpleasant, however. But it had to be done. She had a case——"

"He had promised to marry her!"

"No, not that. But juries are a tricky lot. One

never knows—they have brought in big verdicts on the most flimsy evidence. And Lily is very clever. She might have made a sensational figure in the witness box. And Dolan has many enemies. On the Bench, in the Press, down on the Street, and among the public.”

Jane said nothing. She had wondered why she had seen nothing of Lily Lawrence for the last few months. She suddenly felt sorry for Lily. She disliked her, she had always disliked her, no less because of the years of enforced intimacy. But she was pitiful for her now. That bitter, hard woman with her one great gift—a gift that she had lost. Or had she sold it for a mess of pottage? Jane didn't know. She said to herself that if ever she could help Lily——

Rupert was uncanny sometimes. He said, sharply:

“If Lily Lawrence calls to see you, you are not at home.”

Jane nodded. She understood. This was another order. When there had been a need for Lily Lawrence, they had used her. Now, with the large gesture of indifference, they threw her away.

Rupert was speaking again. Something in his tone, a tone almost fanatical, held her attention, caught, curiously, at her heart.

“I wish you could understand, Jane. I know you've despised me for the companionship with

Dolan. But it has been necessary. I tell you I must have power. I've got to climb by means distasteful to you. You called me Dolan's henchman a little while ago. That hurt me, my dear. And it is true. See, I'm coming quite clean with you. We've never gotten together on this. We couldn't somehow. You come of people who made the first laws, Jane. And who kept them, I suppose. And who later said, 'We can't soil our hands with this.' I suppose that all your life you've heard that gentlemen don't go into politics. Don't touch pitch for fear of defilement. Well, perhaps it's true. And it's time it was changed if it is. I—you'll laugh, I suppose—but I have always cherished certain ideals. I have always wanted power—power that I could use for the common good. My God, don't you suppose I know how rotten things are? Don't you suppose I *ache* to wield a broom in this Augean stable—to some purpose?"

Jane demurred.

"Dolan doesn't seem quite the broom you——"

He interrupted her impatiently:

"*Can't* you understand? I must let Dolan use me so that I may use him. I have to start somewhere. If I start with him, so much the better. I am compelled to go through these routine channels, Jane. It cannot be done any other way. Once I have made my own mark—Jane, Jane, don't you see that it is

just in order to abolish such men as Dolan that I must work through Dolan, until the time is ripe?"

"But you *liked* Dolan," said Jane, stupidly.

"Of course I liked him. I like him now as a human being. That has nothing to do with it."

"I suppose not."

"Dolan is a good master," said Rupert. "He never yet went back on a friend——"

Jane stared at him. Was it possible that he couldn't understand his own words? Or had she heard wrongly?

He knew before she asked the question.

"Oh, you don't mistake me. I'll turn traitor some day. I'm not a soft, sentimental, large-handed Irish boss. But I'll turn traitor for the good of the many. Jane, if I have to climb through swamps and filth and decay to reach my goal I shall. And once I have the power——"

"Oh, power—power," she cried, wildly. "And will none of the filth cling, blind you, eventually to your vision?"

The telephone rang sharply. Barry answered. He came back presently and kissed her. He touched her shining hair with a hand urgent and tender.

"I must go. That's Dolan. He wants to see me tonight. Jane, try not to judge me too harshly."

Long after he had gone she sat there listening to the dry rustle of the warm spring wind in the cur-

tains. Rupert—an idealist who prostituted himself to reach that ideal. Incongruous, amazing thought. Was there no way in which he could have reached it without stain? If he had only told her this years ago. But he had not. He had let her think—terrible things. It was too late now for him to “come clean” as he had put it.

Ruthless. Lily had served; she must go. Dolan would outlive his usefulness. He would go too. She did not for an instant doubt that Rupert would attain his ambitions—whatever they were. She did not doubt that he would one day stand in the position for which he longed, for which he so deviously worked. She could not disbelieve in him. One day he must be a power for good in the country. But by what means would he have reached that goal?

“Two wrongs can’t make a right,” she said, stubbornly, and closed her eyes on a vision of Rupert climbing—climbing over the bodies he despised to some high place of attainment.

If he had only told her! Always she came back to that. She would have tried to understand. But it was too late now. She repeated it aloud and rose. He would be late with Dolan. She took a novel and a box of her cigarettes and went into her bedroom. She said to herself that Rupert had married the wrong woman. He should have mated with a woman as merciless, as one-ideaed as himself. She would

have helped him climb and perhaps at the end he would not have tossed her away, too.

Lily. She would go see Lily. Perhaps Lily could make her understand.

CHAPTER XVII

JANE took her perplexity about Lily Lawrence to Anne. She told her, rather abruptly, of Rupert's veto on the association, and of her own inner conviction that Lily was an ill-used woman. Anne listened, a thoughtful frown between her brows, her eyes going often to the wide windows of the small house she and Paul had taken some years ago. There was a big community garden in back, five yards thrown into one, and Janice played there with other children, her tall, red-gold head much in evidence.

"I don't know," said Anne, finally. "Sure you're not taking a sentimental view of the picture? I'm inclined to think she has reaped according to her own sowing. But she must have been in a panic, about something, to force Dolan's hand as you say she did. And a very heavy hand, too."

Jane flushed, suddenly, scarlet. The rise of color made her seem very youthful.

"Oh! Oh!" she said, in an almost comic despair, "Rupert told me not to tell!"

"Yes, I imagine that he would. Never mind, Jane, I'll not say anything. Not even to Paul. To Paul

least of all. But you *are* indiscreet for a politician's wife."

"I hate that label," said Jane, a little sullenly; "it sounds dreadfully common."

"Yes, I suppose so," Anne answered, smiling slightly. "No Marlowe has ever been in politics—that is, not since the very early days. I doubt if they were a tremendous lot cleaner than now, by the way, but at least they had a newness about them, a dignity, a sense of adventure. Perhaps it was the clothes men wore then," Anne added quite seriously. "Oh, you needn't laugh! Clothes may not make the man, but they seem to have made the manners. Look at the carelessness of men's attire nowadays—I mean soft shirts and collars and tucked silk dress shirts and all that—and ponder on the carelessness of their social contacts. I admit that soft collars must be more comfortable."

But Jane was not listening.

"Anne, do you believe that the means justify the end—always?"

"That's a large question. You'll have to be more explicit."

"Suppose that, in order to attain a position of great power for good, a man had to associate with—oh, unscrupulous men, with men not at all bent on the common welfare—had to employ their methods, be used by them, before he could use *them*?"

Anne jumped to her feet. Her delicate, small body was as slender as ever. She looked very young.

"Jane, Jane, don't ask me to sit in judgment. How do I know? How can I weigh people's ultimate motives?"

"But Rupert—"

Anne put her finger on a bell, then crossed and sat down on a footstool at Jane's feet.

"Don't say it. Nothing about Rupert, I mean. It isn't wise, Jane. Not even to me. I tell you if there is one lesson we learn as we go along this funny, ridiculous, tragic, beautiful road of life, it is that we must work things out for ourselves. Outside advice, no matter how dearly beloved and trusted the adviser is, is bad—even when it's good! Now that's Irish, if you will, but it's true. Counsel, even the wisest, is only confusing, my dear. We have to take our hedges alone. We're all searching for something, I don't know what it is—perhaps for a recompense that will eventually reconcile us to the loss of everything we hold valuable. And we search alone. Confidences—I warned you about confidences a hundred years ago, Jane. Confidences are never sagacious. And confidences about one's husband are foolish in the extreme. I—I don't know. You married him. Believe in him as hard as you can—that's the best I have to offer. You'll be happier in the long run, more at ease with yourself, even if your belief was

mistaken. Oh, Katie," as the maid appeared at the arched doorway, "tea in here please, and ask Miss Janice if she will join us."

Anne was always so courteous to her child, Jane thought. It was quaint of Anne and very Anne-ish!

"Before tea—and Janice," said Jane hurriedly, "and in spite of all you said about advice, shall I go see Lily Lawrence or not?"

"Let your conscience be your guide," Anne answered, frivolously. "But I mean that. Go if you feel you should. Otherwise don't. Either way, you'll regret it. And perhaps it is better to regret something you have done than something you haven't. Heavens, how philosophical I am lately. That comes of reading so much to Paul—he has had so many headaches lately."

Janice came in flushed and warm from her playing. She kissed her mother and aunt, dropped, in sudden remembrance of her duty, a funny little curtsey and ran off to wash her grimy little paws for the glass of milk and bread and butter sandwich she was allowed at tea time.

"Isn't she a *darling*?" Jane breathed, looking after the slight figure of the child.

"Yes," said her sister shortly, not from any lack of enthusiasm in agreement but out of sheer pity. That look in Jane's eyes hurt her terribly. She said to herself, "I almost wish she could have been

Jane's." In thinking so she did not deny her own adoration for her daughter. She was merely thinking that the bounties of this world are often unevenly divided. To possess Paul—and Janice. That seemed almost too much for one woman. Anne was often a little awed at her own riches, a little terrified.

Two days later Jane went to see Lily Lawrence. She had sent her a note to apprise her of her coming. Lily lived uptown now and Jane drove up through the late May heat, dreading a little the stuffy, pseudo-Oriental splendor of Lily's small apartment. She climbed the two flights of stairs panting a little, her hair damply curled on her forehead. Knocking, the door was flung open and Lily stood there, gaunt and untidy, her age very apparent, and beyond her shoulder Jane saw the bare, dismantled aspect of the room. Carpets rolled up, most of the furniture gone, two or three chairs uneasily scattered about the dusty emptiness of the place.

"Why, Lily!"

"Come in," said Lily, in her hoarse voice, "and sit down. I'm getting out of here tomorrow."

"But—where—why?" Jane asked her in genuine bewilderment.

Lily laughed, outright.

"Butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, would it? Did Rupert Barry send you?"

Jane shrank a little under the abrupt blow of the question and the hard suspicion in the long, green eyes. She stepped into the room and pulled the door shut behind her. She did not sit down. She couldn't. She stood there, flushed, trying to answer the query and the suspicion.

"Why, no, Lily—he didn't want—I mean he doesn't know—I mean——"

She was floundering hopelessly. Lily gave a short laugh.

"I see. Pane of glass, aren't you, Jane? Not stained glass either. Here, sit down. I want to talk to you. You won't see me again, I think. I'm leaving New York."

Jane sat down.

Lily, standing by the small fireplace, laid her long arm over the mantel. She was eccentrically dressed in green, a garment neither apron nor frock but partaking a little of the qualities of the two.

"I suppose Rupert told you about me—and Jim Dolan?"

For the life of her Jane could not have denied it.

"I see," Lily nodded. "Well, I'm glad you came. I would have come to see you if you hadn't. There are one or two things I'd like to make clear to you."

She paused a moment, then went on evenly. And all through her long speech, broken only by short

silences on the speaker's part, Jane Barry did not move or utter a word.

"I've never liked you," said Lily. "You weren't my type. Anne—I was crazy about Anne, when I first knew her. She was so unusual. And then I thought, too, that she could be of assistance to me. I've never told you much about my life; you wouldn't have wanted to hear it. You'll hear it now. I was born just as near the gutter as possible. A gentleman scoundrel for a father, a worn-out actress for a mother. I fought my way up, tooth and nail. I stopped at nothing. People interested themselves in me. I used them as long as they were valuable, no longer. When I was old enough to attract men, I used them, too. If I could get something without paying, I took it. If I had to pay, I paid. But in the end I discarded my creditors, like broken rungs of a ladder. You wouldn't understand that. Or perhaps you do. Then when I met Anne, she stood for all that I had never had. And there was money back of her as well as all that compelling nonsense of Family. I thought that if I could capitalize her admiration for me I might live easily, as I had always wanted to live. And without men. I was sick of men. But she married.

"Jim Dolan. That red-faced, simple man. You see how the wheel turns? I stood to him for all he had never had. Education—he never knew where

and how it was obtained—and talent—and the sophisticated, artificial viewpoint. For years he helped me—to live.

“I was not his mistress, no matter what you may have thought. I was too clever. Now I doubt if I wasn’t a little too clever. I always thought that eventually he would want to marry me. I wasn’t anxious for that outcome—at first. But later it seemed to me possible, even probable and desirable. I could have pushed him, you know. He would have gone higher than ever he’ll go now. And it wasn’t hard to keep him dangling—and paying—with talk of platonics and such things. A less simple man would have thrown me over long ago.

“When I met Rupert Barry, before you married him, I recognized in him certain qualities individual, I had thought, to myself. I did not like him. If you will remember I told you so. But I admired him.

“It took some time for me to realize how much Anne cared for you. I hadn’t thought so at first. But she did. And I was very bitter against Anne. Bitter against you, too. It seemed to me that if you had never come to live with her this Paul Abadie complication would never have happened. Oh, you won’t understand that. I don’t suppose I can make you. But you—have an atmosphere about you. Sentimental, domestic, naïve. And that atmosphere,

I felt, seduced Anne into a mood—or so I fancied. If you had not stood, unconsciously, in my way, I was certain things would have worked out as I wished.

“They did not. And when I learned from various sources after your marriage that Rupert Barry was trying to gain an entrance to Jim Dolan’s patronage, I was amused. I realized, I thought then, I think now, that gratified ambitions on his part would be the worst possible bar to your happiness. And hasn’t it been? Hasn’t it? Look at you—what are you? A makeshift wife at best—from your point of view. Don’t you suppose I know the kind of life you want, the kind of life you were created for? Country club and country house, bridge parties, a kind, affectionate, average husband, half a dozen children? And what have you now?

“So I furthered Rupert Barry’s plans. I had a good deal of influence with Dolan. In a measure I made Rupert Barry. Well, I’d read *Frankenstein*; I should have been warned. No woman is ever as clever as she thinks she is.

“When your husband decided that he was strongly enough intrenched in Dolan’s confidence, when he came to the conclusion that he was indispensable to that simple Irishman, he decided that I must go. You see. Used me—as I had used others. Then he cut me out of Dolan’s life as if I had been a cancer.

"I admired him for it. I tell you, now, and I mean it, that I very nearly loved him for it. I hated him—but I almost loved him. He was myself all over again—a masculine *alter ego*.

"I was getting old—for a woman. I had had no lover for a long time. I had never had one stronger than myself.

"I thought that if I could be of use to Rupert Barry—with Dolan in the discard—it would all be very easy. I thought that perhaps Rupert had worked toward that end, secretly. Seeming to remove Dolan from my influence, in reality himself becoming—— Oh, never mind all that. The rest is brief enough. I had some letters of Jim Dolan's. Silly, banal, disgusting things. The sort a man like Dolan always writes. I threatened him, through Rupert. I knew what would happen. I hadn't intended to use them. Not unless my hand was forced. I had given up the idea of marrying Jim Dolan.

"Rupert came to me to parley for the letters. I was very silent. Sometimes it pays us to be silent—you'd better remember that! He came several times. My God, how clever that man is, I thought. Well—let's get on with it.

"I intimated that I'd let the letters go for an emotional price.

"He came here, not many weeks ago. From

Washington. Straight here. He had sent me a note. That was the stupidest thing he ever did in all his life. I suppose he was very sure of himself.

"We had supper, here. After a while I went into my room—I wanted to change into something comfortable, I told him. I was a fool. I was as tremulous as a girl. I thought I was a girl—for a moment. I seemed to have slipped back to something I had never known.

"While I was in the other room he went through my desk. The letters were there. In a bundle. I had them ready to give him. I thought that victory was very near. I was exultant, I tell you. What we might have done together, Rupert Barry and I!

"When I came in again, he had gone—and the letters with him!"

There was a dead silence in the stripped room.

Lily's long hand went to her bosom—she flung a bit of crumpled paper at Jane.

"Here—take that. Use it if you want to. I'd as soon swear my life away on the stand. It doesn't matter now. Hoist on my own petard. I tell you it's a terrible thing to have dealt with weak men all your life. You get—reckless. You forget strength exists save in yourself. Then you encounter it. It terrifies you. But you worship it. Then it destroys you."

She was sobbing now, hysterically, painfully. Dry sobs.

Jane smoothed out the bit of paper. A Washington hotel. Her husband's handwriting. She read it, knitting her brows as if she had just learned to read.

"I will be with you at eight o'clock on Wednesday night. No one knows I am coming back to town. You must be ready to fulfill your promise to me."

Initials signed it. It had been "stupid" of Rupert. Jane admitted that to herself, clearly.

Lily leaned forward. She looked like a Fury. Her hair fell about her tragic Pierrot face, her painted mouth was stretched in a grimace of despair and madness.

"You—divorce him. That will hurt him more than anything in the world. After all—the intention was there, was it not? I'll swear to anything."

Jane got up. She staggered a little, which genuinely surprised her.

"I'll go now," she said.

Lily came close to her. She caught her by the arm.

"You'll do nothing——?"

"What can I do?" asked Jane wearily.

Lily answered, slowly:

"I see. Nothing, I suppose. He's broken us both. And there will be other women. There's one now.

Oh, I don't know who she is. I don't care. But the man's a machine," she cried, suddenly shaking Jane's shoulder. "He isn't human. He doesn't care for any one—for anything—except for his own ends. God knows what they are, I don't. And there's no passion in him except for advancement."

Jane found herself on the dim landing. She went down the stairs and into the blinding sunlight. It hurt her eyes. Wisps of paper danced in the gutters, uncannily informed with life. They were like Lily, she thought—empty, and discarded at the last.

There was paper in her own hand. She tore it up and scattered the fragments, watched them dance away. She knew that a little later she would be very sorry for herself. Just now she was being sorry for Lily. She fancied she could hear the dry, hoarse sobs still. Involuntarily she glanced up at the windows of the room she had left. Curtainless, they stared down at her from under the torn eyelids of faded green shades.

Jane got into her car. She laid her hands upon the wheel. She said, aloud:

"Why—she *loves* him!"

And added:

"I wish I did."

CHAPTER XVIII

RUPERT noticed a change in her. "A pane of glass," Lily had said. Opaque glass, then. For he could not read the signs through it, darkly or otherwise. He put it down to worry over Paul Abadie, who had been through another alarming attack. Rupert had his suspicions of the "acute indigestion" theory, stoutly adhered to by Paul and Anne. And was sorry. He liked Paul, even if he didn't approve of his magazine.

Then, too, Jane said she was tired. Tired and not very well. She slept badly, she explained, and withdrew to the little guest room, which once—how long ago—Anne and her husband had occupied. Briefly, in flashes, Rupert wondered if she were piqued at his frequent neglect of her. Neglect that not so long ago he had been able to eradicate, he thought, from her mind by his occasional, sincere flares of tenderness for her during which he was again, and as wholly as was possible to that divided nature, the lover.

"Tired and moods," said Rupert, and let it go at that.

Dolan was going to Europe that summer, sailing very soon. Good Ground, therefore, was not indi-

cated. And Jane, in a burst of what she called sentimentality, took a little cottage in Easthampton. Rupert could week-end there if he cared to. Anne and Janice would come down and Paul, dear Paul, whenever he could. If only she and Anne could persuade Paul to take a long rest.

The cottage was minute, as such "cottages" go—a long, gray, shingled house which seemed a natural growth of the earth rather than a thing of builders' construction. It was outside the usual colony, almost on the dunes, and hugged the sand as if it loved the patient, shifting warmth of it. It was gay with chintz and painted furniture and had many long windows open to the sound and smell of the sea. At night Jane would watch the armies of the curving dunes marching to some hidden destination, watch the moon lying white and strange on the curling breakers and wonder that it was all the same. It did not seem fair that it should be the same—and she so changed.

That summer she saw a great deal of Roger Weston. He came and stayed at the Maidstone, most of the season. One could always depend on him for week-ends.

Anne, who was there frequently and who left Janice there for the entire summer with a competent nurse, said nothing. Once Jane asked her desperately, "Anne, why don't you tell me I am seeing too

much of Roger?" And Anne answered, without expression, "Do you need to be told?"

No, she did not need to be told. She knew. But she assured herself that there was no danger in the constant, pleasant association. Roger was such a good companion. Roger was so thoughtful. Roger was so dependable—and safe. She was not in love with Roger, she knew that very definitely and if Roger were in love with her she shut her eyes to the fact. Now and then she opened them abruptly to stare into the future and questioned herself, "Roger?" She answered herself, "He can take care of himself. He's a man. Why shouldn't I have a little, innocent good time?"

But it appeared that Roger couldn't take care of himself.

He communed with himself, walking over the links, stalking over the sand, fighting the undertow in the ice-cold, jewel-blue waters. He argued, night after night, when he had seen Jane home from some Inn festivity or other, when he had brought her back in his car from the beach, from Shinnecock or from Good Ground of ancient memory or a dance somewhere. He argued in a circle. The one fact stood out clear enough to his slow-moving, tenacious mind.

"Jane isn't happy. Her marriage was a mistake. Jane isn't happy."

As it had seemed to him on that day when he had met her on the Avenue—oh, these casual encounters!—so it now seemed to him still the most important question in life. Jane's happiness. But through the drowsy, sea-salt summer another question rose to take its place beside the first. His own happiness.

My God, he had loved her since they were kids. He'd wanted her then, he wanted her now. All that had gone between made no difference. Other women—well, he'd thought himself in love often, as a man will. But somehow he'd never asked another woman to marry him.

Jane was—how old? Twenty-seven? Twenty-eight? And himself in his middle thirties. He was beginning to feel enormously cheated. He wanted his wife and his children. He didn't stop to consider that he hadn't felt cheated before. He had been content enough with his life. The Diplomatic Service had been amusing. Gestures and satin knickerbockers, pretty women and big issues running under the shallows of talk. Amusing, too, the spending of the money that had come to him, the "business" he had bought and which was like a toy. As a little lad he had loved shining new automobiles.

As a bachelor of means he had a good time. He'd gone to the homes of his married friends, admired their houses and their children and flirted

a little, in a "perfectly nice way," with their wives. Then he had come away satisfied with his lot. Now and then if he thought of marriage at all it was with a sense of escape. Now and then, on the other hand, he had thought of Jane—what a darling redhead she had been!—and wondered if *her* matrimonial venture had "turned out"; wondered, sentimentally, if the hour were late or the season spring, how it would have eventuated had he, and not the unknown Rupert Barry, stood by her side in morning coat and striped trousers one blowy, sunny October day.

But he had forgotten all those careless years between. He was a boy again, heartsore, heartsick, rebellious, a little sullen. He had loved her all these years! He had been cheated!

Rupert came down now and then. The two men met! Roger, wary and trying not to feel guilty, Rupert, absent-mindedly cordial, now and again thanking the younger man for "making Jane's summer pleasant." At first that made young Weston feel a cur of the deepest shade of yellow in the spectrum.

Just the graceful, differing phrasing of the same thought. Later the charming, abstracted manner smote him as insincere—which, in all justice to Rupert, it was not, and he felt annoyed.

Who was he, anyway? What was he? Oh, one knew about Dolan and his indispensable young men

of course. One heard, vaguely, of certain possibilities in careers. Careers, thought Roger, were going cheap nowadays. "Nice careers, a little shopworn! Who'll buy my careers at a bargain?" But wasn't there something—Roger still had friends in Washington. He would make inquiries.

With an adroitness which had not distinguished young Mr. Weston in the Diplomatic Service, he made them. And all sorts of strange fish rise to that particular bait. Some as fabulous as the sea serpent; others an authentic catch.

Inevitable that, knowing this and that and thinking he knew more, he should feel himself the rescuer rather than the usurper.

September was a wonderful month that season. Summer lingered on into October, reluctant to yield her altars to another divinity. Anne, at the end of the month, had come down for a last week's stay. Janice must be put to school within a few weeks. Paul, engaged in getting out a special number, engrossed in proofs of his new book of poems, had not come with her. Rupert was away, Jane couldn't know where. She lumped all his vanishings into the vague term "Washington." Roger and Jane were alone, walking on the beach in front of the shingled house.

There was a moon. There always is, somehow. Jane sighed.

"Tired? Let's sit down."

The sand was still warm from the heat of the day, but the moon had turned it ghost silver, spirit pale and there was no gold left in it. Jane sat down and ran her fingers through the fluid stuff.

"Not tired. It's been a pleasant summer."

Roger thought savagely that she was quoting Rupert.

"You've been lonely, though," he suggested.

She turned to him. The moonlight made curious shadows in her hair, bleached it of its radiance. Moonlight is hard on many women, on most women over thirty. But Jane was equal to the metal challenge of its glitter.

Drained of color, her face showed leaner contours than earlier in the season, her mouth was a dark signal in its pallor. Her eyes seemed as blue black as Anne's.

"Why, no. Janice is wonderful company. Then I've had Anne. And Aunt Hattie for that flying visit. Paul, too—and you."

He said something and she leaned nearer.

"I didn't hear. Oh, listen to the sea tonight. There'll be a storm. Isn't that a ring around the moon?"

She had been warned, he was talking against the inevitable revelation.

"Jane, I love you so much."

"Roger, hush. Don't spoil it——"

"Don't spoil what?"

"Friendship. Such a dear, kind friend, Roger."

"Jane, don't be a dear little ostrich. When has it ever been friendship with me? How long ago—almost ten years, isn't it? Do you remember? What an awkward, idiotic boy I was—unable to find the right word, incapable of making you see! I've loved you all this time, Jane. If only you could have loved me, ten years ago."

"Please—please——"

"You don't love *him*."

She was silent. Had she spoken, Roger would have told her; he would have exhibited his aquarium of little, fleeting shadowy facts for her—like fishes darting in certain shallows. But she did not speak.

Eventually she said:

"But I'm married."

His heart leaped. He pressed his advantage eagerly, digging his sun-browned hands into the warm sand to stay their seizing her. But sand is shifting.

"I know. But you can divorce him, Jane, and then——"

She thought of Lily—Lily and her urgency. "Divorce him—I'll swear to anything."

"Don't speak——"

She wanted to think. To be alone and think.

She wasn't in love with Roger, of course. But she loved him. He was her friend. No, he had said he had never been her friend. Still, he stood for the solid things, the things one could grasp, tangible, dependable. He could give her all she wanted, all she had never had. Perhaps the other thing would follow. The rapture. The ache and the timorous thrill. Perhaps. Or was she too old?

Old? And not yet thirty?

A lone gull flew over the stretch of sand, beating gray wings seaward. It cried, as it flew, on a poignant note, the harshness lost on the drumbeat of the breakers. A cry like a lost child.

Rupert. He'd let her go. It would hurt him, of course. Hurt his career. But not for long. He was strong. He would conquer it. Just another obstacle. And he'd be glad to let her go, she thought. Wherein had she helped him toward his ambitions?

She couldn't live with him again. Not after what Lily had told her. She could have forgiven infidelity but not that. That was—low.

What had he said about being willing to wade through any filth, any marsh—swamp—to reach his distant goals?

She couldn't live with him again. For a long time she had known that. They weren't—married. She was an occasional mistress. No more. Or perhaps,

in addition, a housekeeper. Not a very good one, she thought.

Of course if Paul and Anne had never had a child they would still be married. In every fibre. But that was different. Nothing could hold her to Rupert now but a child.

And that would never be.

Roger pleaded, suddenly:

"Jane, come back to me. I'm waiting!"

She turned to him again. Her eyes were pitiful. Far off the gull gave once more that child's cry of bewilderment and terror.

"Roger, I don't know."

He thought he had won. He caught her in his arms. Kissed her, held her a long moment.

Jane's heart, beating fast against his, said:

"No. No. You couldn't. Not this. Never. Better the memory——"

"Please——"

But he was deaf, blind. He was talking, the words stumbled and incoherent. The tone exultant. The man informed with a certain triumph.

"I'll not let you go. You belong to me. I love you—love you."

"Hush! What was that!"

A voice, like the gull's calling, wailing. Jane tore herself from Roger Weston's arms. She got to her feet, her light dress was blown back, moulded

to her in the sea wind. Her hair was tumbled to her shoulders. She swayed there, tiptoe, frightened.

"What's the matter?"

He had risen too. She said:

"I heard her."

"Who?"

"Janice."

He was sullen, impatient, reacting naturally to his emotions.

"Nonsense. At this time of night? Anne's with her. Jane, you can't put me off; you *must* listen to me."

But she was running. The Spanish shawl she had flung about her shoulders billowing away from her, a monstrous flower bereft of all color by the moonlight, gleaming silk.

"Janice!"

A small figure rounded the dunes, running also. A little figure crying pitifully as the sharp, hidden shells cut the bare feet; Janice, in her nightgown, the slender rosy body of the child shuddering; Janice calling, terrified, her eyes torn wide open, her red curls loose upon her little shoulders.

"My darling!"

Jane caught her in her arms, wrapped the shawl about her, lifted her, held her close.

"What is it, dear? A bad dream? Where's Mother?"

The child choked, clinging to Jane's neck. Roger had come up now, and his pleasant, cheerful voice, once more under control, cut across the incoherency of sobbing.

"What's wrong, Baby?"

"Mother—she fell—on the floor. Hilda—looking for you—there was a telephone——"

Jane turned sharply. She said, "*Paul!*" and gave the child into Roger's arms. She ran toward the house, pursued by a thousand demons of terror and premonition.

CHAPTER XIX

THE gray shingled house knew a confusion curiously alien to its light-hearted chintz and flower-stenciled furniture. Janice's nurse, in a kimono of magenta cotton, bent over something—some one—on the floor of the living room. Hilda was frantically approaching from somewhere. "Oh, Mrs. Barry, I've been looking all over." Mary, the cook, was at the telephone. Only Anne was still, very white, gracefully at peace. Her face showed no horror. It wore, like a mask, an expression of secret knowledge.

Roger was on Jane's heels with Janice still in his arms. The child shrank and hid her face from the sight of her mother, a little, fallen marble statue in a black evening gown.

The nurse looked up; she said distractedly, "Oh, the baby in her nightgown and all— I *can't* bring her to——"

She was again leaning over Anne, something in her hand. Jane touched her.

"Take Janice. I'll see to Mrs. Abadie. What happened?"

They all spoke at once.

"The telephone . . . she was sitting reading . . .

she's been distracted-like ever since you left . . . walking up and down . . . she tried to call Mr. Abadie on the telephone. When it rang she thought it was him . . . she ran—I saw her from the dining room . . . she dropped there under the 'phone . . . I couldn't get no answer."

Roger spoke. He gave directions. He lifted Anne to the long couch. Janice went off in the nurse's soothing arms. She was overcome with the sudden merciful sleep of childhood.

"A doctor——"

"No, Roger. No strangers."

She had her sister in her arms. She made none of the conventional attempts to arouse her. Roger said, "See here—lay her flat." But Jane looked at him blindly.

"No. Let her wake—here."

Anne stirred. She opened her eyes. They were black. The pupils were enormous. She said, looking at Jane:

"Dead."

Jane cried out. Anne nodded.

"Paul—" she said, and fainted again.

Roger went to the telephone then and called the doctor who lived near by. Then turned to Jane.

"She'll want to get to town. I'll get my car. My God, how terrible!"

Jane nodded, engrossed in her sister. Her eyes

searched the still face as if they would have torn the secret from them. Her eyes were dry, bewildered, almost savage in their hurt.

Paul dead? It wasn't possible. How had Anne known—before? She had been so restless all afternoon, all through dinner. She had planned to go home in the morning. She had refused to walk with Jane and Roger. "I'll telephone Paul," she had said.

They must let people know. Rupert. Yes, there would be time. They must go to town at once. Perhaps it wasn't true.

Before the doctor had come Anne was conscious. She sat up and said, "How unlike me," and looked at Jane. Her colorless lips stirred in a terrible twisted smile.

Jane questioned, the tears suddenly pouring over her face:

"Who—how did you——"

"I knew. All evening. Oh, they telephoned me." She got to her feet.

"We must go now."

"Yes, dear. Roger is getting the car."

She followed Anne up the winding stairs. Watched her, abruptly helpless to move a hand to help, fling some clothes into a little bag, take a motoring hat and a heavy coat from the closet.

"Hurry," said Anne.

Jane went to her own room. She stumbled, bruising her self against the furniture. Anne—and Paul. This was the most horrible thing that had ever happened. It couldn't be true. It wasn't fair. This senseless cruelty. Senseless. Senseless.

Anne knocked at her door.

"Roger's there. Come."

The doctor was there too. But there was nothing he could do. Anne thanked him patiently, waved aside his offered sedative, refused his friendly offer to accompany them into town.

"Hurry! hurry!"

She had not wept. Her face was still. As still as death, except when she smiled.

"Janice?"

Anne shuddered.

"You'll want to take her?"

"No. No. *Don't* bring her down," she screamed suddenly as the nurse appeared at the head of the stairs.

Roger's great open car stood in the little lane leading to the main road. It throbbed through the beat of breakers, the sighing of a rising wind. He came up the steps two at a time.

"Ready? It's blowing up for a windstorm. Are you well wrapped?"

The two women nodded. The doctor said something inadequate and disappeared silently.

Jane and Anne were in the back seat, Roger driving. The adapted figurehead on the radiator spread silver wings. The car slid smoothly forward, gathered momentum, flew.

Jane had her arms around Anne. Anne leaned against her, as if in kindness. Jane felt that her sister's whole body longed to be erect, unsupported. But she could not let her go.

It was nearly midnight. They had about four hours ahead of them. Perhaps less, if the silver wings were valiant and as there would be no traffic. Four hours.

The strangest night of Jane's life. Anne talked—sometimes for long half hours at a time. Sometimes she was silent. She was not talking to Jane.

"I knew it . . . all evening . . . I have known it for years. It was—inevitable. Women aren't happy like that long. God—there is a God, you know—you wouldn't think it, but there is—God doesn't want them to be. That's because He's a masculine Deity. You knew that, didn't you?"

"Anne—Anne——"

"Oh, hush—what do you know about it? I tell you we were happier than any two who ever breathed . . . day and night, day and night. Lovers. Laughing. But a little afraid.

"*Night.* Never to wake up and hear him breathing.

"Why are you crying? Don't cry. Don't cry. He was nothing to you——"

"Dearest—please—I loved him."

"Oh, yes— Every one did—what do they all know? Love? I tell you, you use the word lightly."

"Anne—please—you have Janice."

"Janice? I tell you I didn't want Janice. I loved her against my will. She had to come between us. You don't know. How could you know? She had to make her helpless claim, on us both. Three instead of two. Instead of one. She split us into separate entities. Father and Mother. Janice? If it hadn't been for Janice, I'd not have left him.

"Left him . . . alone . . . dying—alone. Oh, my God."

Once she screamed, so loudly that Roger heard her above the flight of the wings, the purr of the motor, the obliteration of the wind.

"I won't bear it, I tell you! I *won't!*"

Once, Jane thought she slept, for she was silent a long time, and then her hand went out to Jane's cheek.

"Paul? Paul? Darling, I just remembered."

"Hush, Anne, dearest Anne, it's Jane."

"Jane."

Jane held her tighter. She thought her deranged. Anne—that clean, clear, bright shining mind, clouded and twisted. She was smitten with a new and

more deadly terror. Then Anne's voice reached her.

"I'm all right. Don't be frightened. Stop shaking. Stop crying."

But Jane could not.

After a thousand years they came to the little house. There were lights in the windows, and a faint gray signal of dawn in the city skies. Paul's partner and friend, Jack Appleton, ran down the steps to meet them. A nurse was in the doorway, white capped and serene.

Appleton nodded to Roger, spoke a brief, profane word. His face was drawn, his eyes red. He lifted Anne from the car.

Jane followed up the steps and watched Anne brush the nurse aside. No one else was there. The doctor had gone. The single maid left to take care of Paul was crouched below stairs, an apron over her head, wailing and rocking.

"Take me to him."

She had *run* up the stairs. They heard a door open and shut.

Appleton made a tired gesture.

"Let's wait, here," he said, and added, "I've attended to things. Is that all right?"

Jane thanked him with her eyes. She went into the little living room shrouded in its summer garments, ghastly in the electric light. She unwound her veil and turned her ravaged face to him and Roger.

"Tell us."

"I was with him for the night. It was after we had gone to bed—angina, the doctor said—terrible."

He hid his face and Jane shivered.

Roger said:

"That she shouldn't have been here . . . that seems——"

Appleton looked up.

"It was a mercy. It would have killed her. He suffered—horribly. But not for long."

He put a hand in his pocket.

"He wrote her—tonight. He'd been to see the doctor again. I persuaded him that he had to tell her."

Jane took the letter.

"I'll give it to her—later."

They sat awhile in silence, the thoughts of each approaching and then stumbling back from that closed door.

Jane spoke:

"Roger, there's nothing you can do. Jack will stay. Go to a hotel and get some sleep."

"I don't want to leave you."

She protested, strangely.

"I must tell Rupert, you see. And there's something you can do for me."

She went close to him and spoke softly. Roger nodded.

"All right. That's best too, I think."

In a moment he was gone and she was alone with Paul's friend.

"I'll never forget. My God, what will *she* do?" he asked, haggard.

"I don't know, Jack. What will we all do, without Paul?"

He spoke again, abstracted:

"You'll see him—later. He looks—very peaceful, now. The best friend—the most wonderful."

He was a young man, handsome in a strained, dark way. Jane touched his shoulder maternally.

"I know. Don't try to tell me."

The nurse came in.

"I've been waiting outside the door. She—talked at first. It's quiet in there now. I don't like it much. If I were to go in——"

"Don't go in," said Jane. "Please wait next door."

The woman turned and left them. Jane spoke to Appleton.

"Was she here?"

"No, I was alone with him. Later the doctor brought her when he came. I kept her on. For Anne, I thought."

"That was good of you, Jack."

After a time there was autumn sunrise on the panes and lying in pale golden pools on the floor. Golden. What did that make Jane think of?

Daffodils. Daffodils in a—was it a black bowl? And a long twilight-blue room. Anne and Paul together. Embraced. And a girl stumbling in upon them.

She moaned and caught her lips between her teeth. She thought she would faint. Oh, the senseless cruelty of it!

Appleton jumped up.

"Here, this won't do. What have I been thinking of?"

He went into the dining room, spoke down the echoing shaft of a dumb waiter. A little later Mary, the old Irishwoman, crept up the stairs with steaming coffee. Jane and Appleton drank, sitting at the bare table. The nurse joined them, shaking her smooth, blond head.

"I don't like it."

They heard a step on the uncarpeted stairs. Firm. Steady. Light. Anne's step. They sat there, the three of them, caught into a suspension of all emotion.

She came into the room. Her dark eyes rested on her sister and Appleton with a certain aloof kindness. She even included the nurse in her wide gaze. She came to the table before Appleton could get to his feet and put out her hand for a cup.

Jane thought, "She's not changed," and thought again, "How changed she is!"

She was pale, but not abnormally so. Her eyes were shining but not with tears. Her beautiful mouth was curved, tenderly. She looked like a woman who might have walked with the Christ in the garden. Fearless, understanding, compassionate.

"You could go up, Jane."

Jane went, unsteady. She reached the closed room and went in to Paul. After a time she came down again.

She said to herself that he had spoken to Anne. He had found the right word. She could almost see it on the carven, colorless mouth. The right word. What had it been?

Anne was talking quietly to Jack Appleton about the terrible, the shocking things that must be done. Jane fled to another room and the nurse later found her there and cared for her. The nurse left that house with bewilderment in her eyes. She had never been in such a one before.

Rupert could not be reached. At least no answer came from the telegram sent to the Washington hotel.

A little after noon Anne went to the room next to where Paul lay. She let Jane undress her. She was quite passive. She turned her face to the wall and Jane left her. She lay there, almost unmoving, until another day had dawned.

The telegram to Rupert had come back. "Not found." Jane was stung to a fury of impatience.

Surely he was in Washington? She started, that second evening, telephoning to all likely places. Finally at the Willard a bored clerk told her that Mr. Barry might be at such and such a place although they had sent the wire there and it had been returned.

She called the hotel, a small one, a little out of the city. But it was one in the morning before she got through. She asked for Rupert and a sleepy operator muttered something and Jane waited.

A woman's voice answered.

"Mr. Barry," said Jane sharply.

The receiver was hung up. But not before she had heard an exclamation. Frantically she finally succeeded in getting the hotel again. The same operator answered.

"I must reach Mr. Rupert Barry. There's been a death——"

Faint and gnat-like the drawl reached her.

"Not registered here, Madam."

But six hours later he called her. At Paul's.

"I've just reached the Willard. Your wire. Yes, I'll take the first train."

Jane hung up. It didn't matter.

She went in and looked at Anne. Anne was asleep at last. Jane bent over her and put the letter in her hand. Paul's letter. Paul was no longer there. They had taken him away. But not from Anne.

She envied Anne, sharply.

When Anne woke she saw the letter lying beside her where it had dropped from her lax hand. She opened it.

"My darling."

Anne caught her clenched fist against her mouth. Never to hear it again. Never.

She read the letter through. Only portions stayed with her.

"Don't worry—it may not be serious. If it should be, we have had more than any—— Oh, be glad always we have had that. If it should happen, please remember how I loved you—brave and gallant and wonderful—always. Janice—*ours*——"

She said aloud:

"If I had been here—taken me with him——"

She looked again at the letter. Suddenly her cry rang through the unnatural stillness of the house.

Jane was there, in the room now, beside the bed.

"Anne—Anne——"

"Janice—Janice—*I want our baby!*"

And Jane answered:

"Hush, dearest. Roger brought her up—she's downstairs."

CHAPTER XX

FINE snow rattled metallicly against the windows. The orange gauze curtains caught the light from the log fire and, blowing into the room, from some obscure source of draught, eddied curiously like flames. Anne Abadie and Jane Barry sat, side by side, on the great overstuffed sofa, and stared into the gold and scarlet of the fire. It was dusk and as yet Jane had not risen to light her many, shaded lamps. They stood now, iron and wood, with their sudden artificial bloom of painted parchment or tinted silk, like curious sentinels.

This was Jane's new house, in an uptown side street east of Fifth Avenue. It had been done for her by a decorator who was, for once, in a way, inspired. The whole house seemed built around her, a setting for her red hair and blue eyes. She had taken, Rupert complained, very little interest in it.

Anne was in gray, a soft shade, not cold as gray often is, but warm and brooding, as feathers. She had not worn black for Paul Abadie. "Black," Anne often said, "is for happy people. For youth. Or for a peaceful, old age." The frock that now clothed her slender figure had a soft white fichu, and narrow

cuffs. She sat with her small feet under her, her chin in her palm.

"I am going abroad," she said, rather abruptly, breaking a long silence that had fallen between them, "with Janice. I'll get a nurse over there. A governess too, I fancy."

"For how long?" said Jane, evenly, but her heart knew a sick, downward, and not unexpected, plunge.

Anne did not answer directly.

"Later she can be put to school. I don't want to live in Paris for a while, though. Jack Appleton, who returns next week, wrote me of a little place in Brittany I could get, very reasonably. I'd make alterations, of course. Cottages in Brittany are more picturesque than sanitary. I'd want bathrooms and all that—and a garden."

"Anne!"

Anne turned her eyes from the fire and looked at her sister. Her gaze was long and deep and full of quietude. There was no resignation in it, but there was acceptance.

"Yes. I can't stay here, Jane. Paul would like me to go back. He'd like to have me bring Janice up there. We had planned to return, in another five years or so. Perhaps he has, I don't know. He loved France desperately. And there must be an earth-pull to places you have loved. I'd feel nearer to him there."

Jane agreed, after a moment:

"I suppose you must go. But I don't feel that I can applaud the idea. Why—I may not see you for years!"

"Perhaps not. I'm sorry, Jane."

Jane cried out, suddenly:

"Anne, what makes you so—serene? I can't understand it. And I'm so torn and restless."

Anne touched her lightly on the shoulder in the elusive way she had when moved to a caress. Paul knew that way well. He had adored it.

"My dear, one wins through to some sort of placidity. One finds some definite thing to accomplish if it is only waiting. That's the way I am now—waiting, on a threshold. But you wouldn't understand that."

Jane answered, humbly:

"I suppose not. Oh, Anne, you never talk of it, but if you would this once—now."

"What is there to say? It had to be. Inevitable. And I suppose, in some strange scheme of pity and irony, it was best. Perhaps it couldn't have lasted as it was. Untarnished. And we would have hated anything other than the most perfect. Some people can bear, philosophically, to watch the fine gold of their emotions dull under the corrosion of the years, of habit, of usage. Not I! Not Paul! It would have hurt us terribly. We would not have found any

compensations—the sort people write about, tell you about. We would have rebelled frantically against the thought that there have to be compensations. So perhaps this was the one way in which we could have kept it new-minted. I don't know. Paul knows, now."

She was silent a moment. Then she went on:

"And there was Janice. At first I had a sort of sheer animal comfort from the living warmth of her. Now—oh, don't think that she compensates either. That sort of thing is a fallacy. How could she? A little girl child, with all her life before her, the majority of her years probably to be spent away from me, if not physically at least spiritually. How could she, by any wide stretch of the imagination, take another's place? Don't let the sentimentalists blind you with that. She doesn't. She never can. She is herself, as I am myself, as Paul was himself. But she is the outward and visible sign—you understand. She is of his flesh."

After another short interval she went on:

"I'll write once more, I think. In Brittany. Before I knew Paul I wrote because I had a little apish talent, a little sense of musical mimicry. Clever. That's what it was. After I knew him, I couldn't. I suppose I was too happy. And too afraid. Afraid of words, you know. Now, I think I can write again. Different. Better. Deeper. I don't know. I hope

so. I am glad to think that I have something left which belongs to myself. And yet in a way, it does not. The genesis is in him."

Jane flung out both hands toward the fire. She cried, a little hysterically:

"I don't think I can stand your going. Anne, I am very unhappy."

Her sister nodded.

"I know. But don't be misled by fictional values. Happiness is never an essential. It is not a necessity. It is, perhaps, a luxury. We can do without it, Jane."

Jane demurred, bewildered:

"But *you* were happy."

"Ah!" Her sister took a deep breath for a moment and her eyes left Jane's to go back to the fire again; then they returned, dark blue eyes with that acceptance look in them.

"Yes. How can I deny it? But how make you see, too, that that which was between Paul and me struck deeper roots than happiness? The happiness has gone. The roots remain."

She paused and then remarked, musing:

"God help the woman—or man—who makes a career of the search for happiness. Jane, Jane, it is such an incidental thing and one does not live by it. One should never live *for* it."

Jane moved her head restlessly against the tawny pillows,

"Oh, I suppose you're right. But I don't seem to be able to deal in aspirations—not today, anyway."

"Of course not. We all have blind moments when we grope out for the near, the human thing. Don't I know? Better than most I suppose. Nor do I expect you to understand—now. But you will some day. You're very young."

"At twenty-eight?"

"What do the labels matter?"

Jane said nothing for a moment. Then she spoke, with a very obvious effort.

"Lily Lawrence said to me once—much as you have said—that happiness wasn't the goal."

"No, it isn't, though many people think it is. It is the foot of the rainbow for most of us. Lily Lawrence. Not her goal certainly. I often wonder what hers was—or is. She wrote me a strange letter—afterward. Last fall. Bitter, but understanding. A curious woman."

Jane said, it seemed, but was not, irrelevantly:

"Roger says he can make me—happy."

"He wants you to divorce Rupert," Anne stated. "I know. He spoke to me, before he went South."

"Yes."

"Well?"

Jane wrung her cold hands together in a gesture unconsciously dramatic.

"I don't know. He offers a good deal. The things I want. And security. And, perhaps, at least, peace. Certainly I have none of these with Rupert. Oh, I know that this sort of discussion is distasteful to you, Anne. But you're leaving me. And I'm so bewildered."

Anne said, evenly:

"You'll do as you—want to, of course. But I think you'd be compromising. If there's to be compromise anywhere, it should be with Rupert. But do you really know what you want? I don't think so. Or, rather, I think that your desires are antagonistic one to the other. And impossible in their relation to each other—and to Rupert. I can't advise you. Why should I? We are totally dissimilar people, in nature, in experience. The only thing I can tell you to do is to—be sure. Find out what you want most of all. What is the breath of life to you. Not what you'll be happy having, but what you'll be unhappy without. And when you find it—go after it. Yourself. Single-handed. And mercilessly. But I don't think you'll find it with Roger. You don't care for him for one thing. You'll be taking everything and returning nothing."

"He said he didn't care about that."

"And you believed him? Don't you think he, too, has goals?"

After a silence Anne rose to her feet, light and

slender, the firelight lending a warmer color to her silver-gold hair. She stood a moment looking down at the other woman.

"When you do compromise, be sure it's worth it. And there are not compensations for loss. The loss of something you've had, the loss of something that has never been given to you. No compensations. Believe me. Don't be cheated with makeshifts or substitutes. Find one thing that can be yours, wholly and without flaw. Work toward that."

Jane went with Anne to the door, wrapping her in her furs, searching out her rubbers and umbrella in a blind sort of way.

"When are you leaving, Anne?"

"Soon, I think. I'll want to talk to Jack and cable Wynne. If possible we'll sail before the spring."

"Rupert comes home tomorrow. Will you come over for dinner one day this week?"

"I'd love to." She stood there a moment, the carved ebony of the umbrella in her gloved hand, the moleskin coat softly wrapping her about. Her eyes, under the little turban, were unusually anxious.

"If—if you could come to grips with Rupert, Jane. I don't think you understand him—not quite. The manner of man he is. He can't help it. He's making his career too. I'm not thinking of State House and banquets when I say that. His mother—she

knows him. Jane, if she could make you see."

"I can't discuss him with her."

"No. You're wise, perhaps. I've always been against that—and here I am—well—try and feel that perhaps he, too, is working for something worth while. Worth while to *him*. The rest of us don't matter, after all. We stand and fall alone. Sympathy, love, comprehension—none of these can alter that."

The door opened and shut. A little flurry of snow eddied on the two broad steps of the English basement house. Jane stood there, uncaring that the bitter wind lashed out at her bare throat above the velvet of her gown. She watched Anne walk away, into the dim, ghostlike, restless hurry of the snow. Then she turned and went back into the house.

Roger was coming for dinner. She had not told Anne. He had not been able to stay South—or so he wrote her. He had come in town that morning and had telephoned her. Rupert was not to be home.

She dressed carefully. Velvet again, but velvet in a festal mood, brown and severe in line but touched with the beaten gold. She thought, resentfully, of Anne.

"Career—a career of aimlessness, if she means mine. Of shutting my eyes. Of keeping Rupert's house and talking to him politely and never touch-

ing on the thing that is between us. Oh, not," she told herself honestly, watching her rebellious eyes in the triple mirrors, "not that unknown woman on the telephone. But all the other things which led up—or down—to her. Afraid to speak, lest I shatter the thin glass of courtesy that shields us from each other—shopping, ordering dinner, seeing people, saving my face—saving his. I'm through with that, I think."

Still, she was not sure, going down the graceful stairs to greet Roger. Not sure, sitting across the big table from him, observing his immaculate, conventional good looks across the roses in the silver, squat jars; laughing a little at his pleasantly malicious description of their mutual acquaintances at Palm Beach. Not sure. Not even when she saw his glance as he looked at her. Not sure when, now and then, his voice dropped to a caressing note and his eyes implored.

They dined, they drank coffee and liqueurs in the drawing room; the new manservant, very correct and impassive, served them. They sat where she and Anne had sat, before the massive stone fireplace and watched the unique, consuming life of the burning logs. They smoked for a time in a companionable silence—or so it appeared.

Roger spoke first.

"See here, Jane, I came back from Florida to have

this out with you, once and for all. I couldn't stand it down there, alone, thinking of you. And just before I left I ran into Jim Wycherly—an Englishman I once knew well. He's going round the world, in the spring. Big game stuff. He wants me along. I can go you know—that little office and showcase of mine won't suffer. It's up to you. Shall I go—or stay? Or shall I go—with your promise that when I return you will have obtained your release?"

Jane asked, sombrely, "How can I promise?"

"But—good God! Do you want to marry me or don't you? Do you want to go on living this half life or don't you? We've been over this ground often enough. It's time we came to some decision."

"To divorce Rupert would mean to check, if not ruin, his career."

"Yes, you've said that before. Do you still love him then? Enough to sacrifice yourself for him? I've been pretty damned patient, Jane. I've listened to you and said nothing. I've kept my tongue off him. I've not told you—anything. Why, he's not even faithful to you, child."

She said, quite steadily, "Yes, I know that."

He stared at her, his good, blue eyes amazed and hurt.

"You know that and still hesitate?"

"Yes."

"What kind of a woman are you? Do you love him? You've never answered that directly?"

"No, I do not. Not in the way I suppose you mean. But I have been his wife. I don't suppose that conveys anything to you."

Roger went dark with blood, his blond skin suffused and ugly.

"You don't suppose that it—oh, Jane—Jane, when I love you with every nerve and fibre of my body."

"I—I don't mean that. I mean, I didn't want to hurt you. It's just because you love me like that that I can't."

"Jane, you're like a child bewildered in a dark room. You don't know—yourself, even. Come to me, marry me, you will love me, I know. And I'll make you so happy, dearest."

She heard Anne's whispering voice in the chuckle of the flames. "*Happiness is never an essential.*"

She stood up.

"I'm sorry, Roger, I wish you'd hate me. But I can't. I can't!"

He came to his feet, too. He had bitter words on his lips and salt stung his eyes. But he said nothing for a moment.

Then:

"This is final."

"Yes, Roger."

"And you know that Rupert Barry has been——"

"I know enough. Don't tell me any more."

"Very well. I'll not annoy you further."

He was childish, sullen. Her heart went out to him. He seemed a sulky little boy, denied a bright, beloved plaything. She put out her hands.

"Dear Roger, but I can't. It wouldn't be fair."

He had her hands in his, had kissed them, and still held them as Rupert Barry came in the room. He came in silently. They had not heard his key in the door. He walked in and stood a moment by the tallest of the standing lamps. He saw in its entirety, perhaps in its significance, the picture they made. Jane, with firelight making ruddy shadows in her hair and glancing back from the gold on her gown, the gold hoops at her ears, the black and white etching of the man who had her hands in his and whose whole figure seemed tense to breaking point.

"Hello!" said Rupert softly, and he walked across the room. "Weston? I didn't recognize you for a moment."

Jane had withdrawn her hands. She looked a moment, blankly, at her husband. She said, without any effect of embarrassment:

"I didn't expect you. Have you dined? Smith could get you something. Oh, Roger was just going."

"Don't hurry," said Rupert. "Yes, I had dinner on the train. I was called back. No time to telephone."

Roger was himself again, something he had not been a second earlier. He made a casual remark or two, spoke of his proposed trip around the world and presently left.

"Climax or anticlimax?" wondered Rupert, aloud. He then added, "See here, Jane, you can't do that sort of thing, you know."

"What sort?"

His tone had been very pleasant. Jane answered in kind.

"Oh, well, artistic farewells and all that."

To his utter astonishment Jane laughed. In that moment she was very like Anne, somehow.

"As long as you are certain it was farewell," she said, and moved toward the door.

Rupert was very tired. He looked it, he felt it in every bone of his strong body. He was a little recklessly impatient.

"Where are you going?"

"To bed."

He followed her to the door. He said, "Look here, as long as you're my wife——"

But she interrupted him.

"I must be above suspicion. Is that it? But—*was Caesar?*"

She left him staring, puzzled and uncomfortable, at the vacant doorway.

CHAPTER XXI

JANE slipped off the brown velvet dress, wrapped herself in a quilted blue silk robe and lay down on her bed. She thought over, with a serenity which astonished her, the little passage-at-arms which had just taken place. And she thought about Roger.

She would miss him very much. She had grown dependent, as lonely women do, upon his *thereness*. She had liked the flowers he sent, the letters he had written, the frequent telephone calls, his position as frequent unofficial escort to the play and concerts. She had liked very much to lunch with him, tea with him, in some colorful room, with an orchestra playing the accompaniment to their talk.

And she had dallied a little with the thought of marrying him, but only a little. If Rupert had not proved the substance, neither would Roger. She might be, she fancied, exchanging shadow for shadow. And nothing that Roger might give her, neither security nor devotion, a house that was home and the laughter of children, would ever be able to compensate her for what she termed her failure. Anne was right. There are no compensations.

She thought of Rupert and Lily Lawrence. Play-actors, both. Yet Lily, at the final curtain, had

shown a surprising weakness, a tendency to forget lines and to ignore cues.

Then there was the other woman, the woman whose careless, well-bred voice had faintly reached her, whose exclamation had been cut short by the jangle of the receiver almost flung back upon the hook. Jane had often reconstructed that Washington situation. Now she did so again.

Rupert had left the Willard for the small hotel on the outskirts. The woman had joined him there. A clerk had been careless. The woman, answering Jane's call, had known the sound of danger even over a stretched wire. Rupert had returned to the city and telephoned his wife.

Who was the woman? No common creature, Jane was sure of that. Sure, too, that she was not any physical embodiment of a romantic desire, nor even the object of some high and reckless passion. An Egeria, in a sense, some clever, silky creature whose word in certain circles would carry weight useful to Rupert.

Who knew? Some one must know. Two never share a secret. Roger knew something. Perhaps nothing very definite. But it should not be difficult, if she wished, to secure all the proof necessary.

What would she do with it? Would she use it as a knife with which to cut her way free, or as a suspended sword?

How did she, personally, feel about this cheating? She could not answer honestly. She had told herself again and again that she did not love Rupert Barry—but was she not measuring love by the yardstick of her early, youthful romance, her delight, her pride in him, her pride in herself as his—her in-love-with-loveness?

Very well, she did not love him. And she had been seriously revolted by his ugly ruse to obtain Dolan's letters from Lily Lawrence. Physically revolted. But she did not "hate" him, and she was not, which is more significant, even wholly indifferent. There was in her some curious response to the relation that had been between them. He had been her lover. She could not lightly sponge that from the slate of her remembrance.

She had not lost him. She had never had him. That much she acknowledged to herself. She had not even that solace of self-pity.

Did she wish to cut herself free of him?

She thought not. Yet their present association seemed so warped and impossible a thing that to contemplate continuing in it until one of them died was unthinkable. She must in some way effect, if not a complete change in relations, some sort of working compromise. And as yet she did not see her way clear to what that might mean, might include, would be.

She heard Rupert go to his room. There was a connecting door between the two. It was unlocked. She lay there, still and wondering. Would he come in, lightly, as was usual with him, to tell her as much as he cared to of his plans, his failures, his victories. Not since that day when he had, in a measure, explained himself to her, had their exchange of thought touched on anything fundamental or important. Would he come in to further pursue the subject that had wavered dimly, yet definitely, between them a little while ago?

He knocked and she answered, not stirring. The door opened and Barry came in, a dressing gown flung about him, a lighted cigarette in his fingers. He sat down on the bed and looked at her.

"Jane, you're getting a little beyond me."

She said nothing. Her eyes were wary, unlike Jane's honest eyes.

Rupert shrugged his shoulders.

"You mistook me, a little while ago. I did not mean to imply——"

She was silent.

He went on:

"There is a vacancy in the State Department. I am very sure of having it. De Witt's death has altered things and this berth is by appointment. I think that it is a short cut. The city job—well, that would have been something else again, next fall,

perhaps. But—I am inclined to this other. Would you care to live in Washington?”

“Why not?”

“We can lease this house. We’ve lost nothing buying it. There are a number of charming apartments in Washington. Perhaps the life would amuse you?”

She looked at him then and answered:

“When I said ‘Why not’ it was more or less at random. I might just as well have said ‘why’. I’d have to think it over.”

He made a gesture of impatience.

“I am not likely to want to appear without a wife,” he told her. “A vague wife somewhere in the background is not an encouraged situation in official circles. You understand that? But what am I to understand by your hesitation?”

“Nothing. ‘A vague wife in the background,’ as you put it, has been my position for some time. You’ll acknowledge that? It could continue, with impunity, a little longer. Why not put the house in the market in the spring. I would like to go to your mother for a time. Or away somewhere for—shall we say a rest? Then, when I have decided I will let you know.”

“Pretty cool,” he murmured, impassive. “I have always thought that you took no interest in my career. I did not know that you would take a mali-

cious pleasure in—throwing monkey wrenches.”

“I would not wish to hurt you, seriously,” she replied. “I am sure you know that. On second thought, yes, I will go to Washington with you. Whenever you like.”

He was astounded at her sudden, and to him, inexplicable change of—was it mind? He looked at her almost angrily, in his effort to read her. She had always been so simple.

“Thank you,” he said.

He rose and stood beside the bed a moment. She was really an extraordinarily pretty woman. And very—sweet. If she had not wholly lived up to his early conception of her, was that her fault? Nature baits her traps prettily enough. She had been trapped, as well as he. And he still loved her. As far as it was in him to love any one, he loved her. He had not had much time in which to tell her so but he thought it must have been self-evident all along.

Her beauty, her social instinct, her background would help him in the city of officialdom. Had she had wit and a sense of intrigue, a diplomatic turn of mind to augment these qualities, she might aid him enormously. But that was not to be thought of. Still——

“They’re not all Dolans down there,” he told her, whimsically.

She was amused. A little astonished. She smiled up at him.

"I suppose not."

He bent to kiss her, his appreciation of her real value and of her exquisite flesh and blood lending a genuine flare of ardor to the caress.

"You haven't been very kind to me—for a long time," he murmured.

She lay quiet. She was lonely. She was still bewildered. She was, thinking of Anne, undeniably sorrowful. It would have been a brief panacea, a little release to have gone to his arms and found some small comfort from the nearness merely of accustomed, human contact. But she could not. Not yet. Not until she was clear with herself.

After a moment, during which she made no sign, he straightened up and left her. She heard the door shut between their rooms.

CHAPTER XXII

JANE was grateful for the excitement attending on Rupert's acceptance of his new post, which resulted in weeks of domestic planning on her part. In this way the poignant significance of Anne's dismantled house did not so much affect her. She was dry-eyed at the piers, seeing Anne off. Only when she held Janice in her arms for the last time did her courage break a little. Anne kissed her sister tenderly and close.

"You'll come through," was her final word. And Jane stood on the open dock in the bright sunshine of a windy March day and watched the liner, fussily attended by her tugs, pull slowly out. She could see Janice dancing by the rail, her red-gold hair flying. She could see Anne, a lonely little figure, straight as an arrow, the flick of a white handkerchief in her gray-gloved hand.

Jane selected from her house her most cherished possessions and sufficient furniture to equip the Washington apartment. She bought spring and early summer clothes, made a round of visits, posed patiently, with a little ironic undercurrent of laughter in her mind, for the photographers of the Sunday supplements. And she read, without emotion,

Roger Weston's farewell letter, sent back with the pilot the day he, too, sailed. The letter was a masterpiece of reproach, restraint, and she couldn't help but think, ill-wishing.

She was sorry about Roger. She hadn't been fair to him, she must always think.

Jane tried hard to persuade Mrs. Barry to give up her cheerful farmhouse and come to Washington to live with them. She felt urgently the need for the third person in their *ménage à deux*. But Mrs. Barry could not be altered from her determination to live and die with her garden, her hens, her small, cretonne-bright house with its glimpse of blue water.

"But we want you!"

"We?"

"Of course. You mustn't feel because Rupert can't get down often——"

"My dear, I feel nothing. Rupert owes me nothing."

"Oh, don't be so bitter. He owes you everything. Life—for instance."

"How valuable is that? But I'm not bitter. You young things are so dramatic. I'm perfectly happy. Rupert discharges all his obligations—if you will have it so—quite adequately. Mind you I don't admit the obligations. I bore him. I was in duty bound to care for him as best lay within my power. Clothe him, feed him, nurse him, educate him. He

owes me nothing. The obligation's the other way round, you know. Or don't you, at your age? Anything he cares to do for me out of affection—well, that's all right. But I won't have any talk of children's duty to parents, or gratitude. I don't believe in such things."

"Mother Barry, you're a remarkable woman."

"Am I? I'm a sensible one—that's all."

Jane looked at her. They sat in the small living-dining room, furnished comfortably, if at haphazard, with some books and many growing flowers to lend color to the dark upholstering of the furniture. The sun streamed in on Mrs. Barry, handsome with her short gray hair, her ruddy, weather-beaten face, her gingham dress. She had grown stout, and her fine skin had suffered a little. Otherwise she was unchanged. Jane longed to put her head down in that ample lap and sob out all her dismay and her doubts. Mrs. Barry was the only mother she had ever known. But not the sort of a mother, Jane thought, to whom one went in tears. Not a sentimental mother.

Jane thought, "I wonder if children mould their parents instead of the other way round?"

Mrs. Barry interrupted these meditations.

"I saw Anne before she sailed, you know. She came down. We'll miss her. She's a fine girl. I always knew she'd develop. I remember when I met her. Still," added Mrs. Barry thoughtfully, "she was

in love with Paul Abadie then. I wonder what she was like before——”

“I wish she hadn’t gone. But nothing could have stopped her. She was determined to get away.”

“Yes. She’ll never get away from herself, if that’s what she is after. It was a pity about Paul. He was fine.”

There was a little silence, then her mother-in-law added:

“Drink your coffee, Jane. And I baked those rolls for you especially.”

Jane drank obediently from the thick blue cups. The coffee pot sat naked and unashamed upon the centre table. A plate of rolls, a pat of fresh butter and a jar of jam were beside it. Mrs. Barry folded her hands in her lap after setting down her own cup.

“Anne asked me to keep an eye on you.”

“She did? You couldn’t do it better than by coming to Washington with us,” Jane answered, smiling faintly.

“No, my dear. I’ll not come. You and Rupert will have to work it out for yourselves.”

Jane flushed suddenly.

“You haven’t told me anything. I don’t want to hear it anyway. It’s not decent,” said Mrs. Barry, quaintly. “But that you and Rupert have been going different paths for a long time, I’ve always known. It would take an unusual woman to go his.

And you're not that. I told you years ago that he'd always go his own. You'll have to find a cross roads somewhere and a path wide enough for the two of you. That's all."

When Jane left Mrs. Barry walked out with her, down the path, out of the white gate, to the little roadster.

"If you get tired of it down there, come back and stay with me awhile," she said.

She kissed her daughter-in-law and patted her on the back with a strong, steady hand.

"You're a good child, Jane."

Washington pleased Jane. She liked the parks and the noble buildings, she liked the broad avenues, the uncommercial spirit of it, the pretty women and her own attractive apartment. She did not mind, much, the entertaining and the complicated social exigencies. Rupert had engaged a secretary for her, something of a gesture in their rather humble position, but a useful and instructive woman who literally gave Jane lessons in society registers, precedence and amenities.

Meeting the women of their "set", Jane was tormented by the single question, "Is it she? Is it she?" and sitting at tea or at luncheon she would run her eyes over the charming, well-cared-for-faces of the various women and wonder—and wonder. She felt that until she had placed this unknown influence

in Rupert's life she would not be able to count her own resources and to plan her own campaign.

She had come to the conclusion that night on which Rupert had come to her room that she could do nothing except conform to his way of life. She must cease being, if not a drag on him, then an innocent bystander. She had enough native wit to fall into line, to work for him, to further his plans. She had learned tact. She would not blunder. She could be of assistance. This other life was impossible. Either she must make up her mind to live Rupert's life or cut herself off from him entirely. This latter step she could not contemplate seriously. It seemed to her a most dreadful public confession of failure. She had failed—she knew that—and her own conviction was enough. There was no reason to take the world into her confidence—at least officially.

She would live his life then. But at a price. What that price must be, how she would force him to pay it, she did not yet know.

One by one she eliminated the women with whom she came into contact. Eventually she narrowed to two. After a time, one remained—Evelyn Warner, the wife of an official in the State Department.

One cannot live ten minutes in Washington without hearing the casual bits of gossip, which swirl idly in that rarefied air like autumn leaves. Jane

soon heard that Evelyn Warner had "made" her husband. Had pushed and pulled and tugged at that sluggish Western lawyer until, groomed and elegant, empty and inflated, he had made his statesman's debut. He was a strikingly handsome man, genial and amiable. The opposition papers called him a "handshaker" and a "rubber stamper", and no doubt he was. He was of obscure but honest beginnings, had married a school teacher—and now occupied a very important position, politically speaking. It was rumored that his wife rehearsed him in every public utterance, wrote all his statements to the Press, oversaw his clothes and selected the women with whom he was to flirt, heavily but without peril. Malice went further, remarking that Evelyn had a schoolroom on the top floor of her narrow house and to that room haled her pupil every morning at eight-thirty in order to put him through his paces.

It was also rumored that Mrs. Warner took a quite maternal interest in each promising young man in the department in which her husband labored. She had an eye for promise. And certainly she had greatly influenced a few.

Evelyn was forty-odd, an attractive woman without a single unusual feature. She was dark, full-figured, with a wide, mobile mouth, nervous, restless hands, and veiled brown eyes. She dressed very well—Warner had made money as a lawyer out

West—and she had the best brought-up children in the city. She was always in the foreground and was a favorite in the diplomatic circles. A well-read woman, a woman who spoke several languages and whose ambition it was to see her husband in a diplomatic post. A good one. She aspired even to St. James and there were those who said, with resignation, that she would probably realize her ambitions—and would, some one remarked, represent her country very adequately. She had the figure—and the figurehead with which to do it.

Some one else said that she was the incarnate embodiment of the steam roller.

Evelyn Warner was very pleasant to Jane. She went out of her way to instruct her deftly and charmingly with a little air of self-depreciation in the Washington ways. She even made a friend of her outside of official business—dropped in informally, asked her to *tête à tête* luncheons, took her shopping, told her the best markets, advised her of social and political undercurrents and sang Rupert's praises to her in a reserved but enthusiastic way.

But it was evident to Jane that Rupert, once entrenched, felt himself strong enough to hold his position without reënforcements. If he had used Evelyn Warner as a lever to force her influential husband to an interest in him, if he had labored to hear her voice speaking through her marital mouthpiece, he

was not confident that he could do without her. What puzzled Jane was Mrs. Warner's exact attitude. Was it possible that the woman really cared for Rupert Barry? Or was it that she so loved power that she would go to any length to further a man's ambitions in order that she herself might profit?

After a time Jane came by degrees to something which seemed to approximate the truth.

Jane had school friends in Washington, girls of families which had survived political chance and change, families accepted in the inner circles of all parties, by reason of their birth and their money and their breeding. Families who sat back in their old houses and lifted supercilious eyebrows over Ming teacups and let the hurry and alterations, the intrigues and subtleties of Washington official life swing by them. To these sooner or later much hidden knowledge drifted. When it amused them to do so they spoke out, delicately. When it did not they kept their own counsel. They were the backbone of the city, they considered, and nothing affected them. They were not dependent on political issues for their existence.

A daughter of one of these families, Mary Young, had been very friendly with Jane and Dolly Sander-son in school. She was still unmarried, because she said, "As soon as I see an attractive man I see another who is more so." And she was still one of the

most popular women in the city. Jane found much comfort in her, sitting together in Mary's rooms in the big, attractive house, and listening to her tell little tales, frivolous and entertaining, of some of the stuffiest men and women in Washington. Everything came to Mary, sooner, rather than late.

Mary was slender and spare, at her best in a riding habit. She had a boyish, brown face and keen blue eyes, a generous mouth, made for laughter, and great loyalty to her friends. She admitted few, however, to this station in her regard and had a huge circle of acquaintances to which she was loyal or not as it pleased her fancy.

At the moment she was considering, not very seriously, the attentions of one of the best looking and most brilliant products of the Naval Academy.

"If Evelyn Warner doesn't get him first," she told Jane one day as they were riding.

Jane jumped a little.

"What do you mean?"

"You know her, don't you? She's the Maternal Spirit moving blithely to direct all Young Talent. And Jimmy's clever. He'll be an admiral if he lives long enough—every one gets to be an admiral before they die—but I'm thinking he has brains enough to be something important before then. Evelyn, dear thing, has had her eye on him for a month. She'll get him attached abroad—if she

lands there herself. And indications are that she will."

Jane said nothing, taking her mare at a leisurely pace through one of the loveliest parks in the world.

Mary said, indifferently:

"She was quite interested in your husband, you know. I had him out several times when he came down on trips—you wrote me, you recall? She met him at my house and I saw the tiger look leap to her eye. She marked him as her own at once. Don't misunderstand me. I don't think she is ever interested in a man personally. Besides, Rupert has *you*. Jimmy hasn't any one, even me, and he is young enough to fall in love with the creature—perhaps," said Mary, sighing exaggeratedly.

After a moment she went on:

"I've a mind to grab him in spite of her. And take him out of the Navy, too; I doubt if the Department will collapse, clever as Jimmy may be. Clever enough, I think, to make good in private life, so to speak. And you can't say that about many of 'em."

After a time she said, casually:

"The honorable John would have been in the discard long ago if it hadn't been for Evelyn. She's pulled him out of many a tight place. Her own ambition. Of course I doubt if she cares a snap of her pie-making fingers for the man, now."

"You mean——"

"Oh, women—not in Washington—but on trips to New York. And elsewhere. Always very curious women, I hear. Stage people and other artists. Well, he hasn't suffered by it—so far. Nothing's been blatant, you know."

Jane pondered afterward, lying in a tub of hot water, soaking the lameness from her muscles.

Evelyn Warner had cool eyes and a hot mouth. Well—if John Warner—— It seemed plain to Jane that now and then—perhaps only now—Mrs. Warner shut her eyes.

She shrugged her white, wet shoulders. How rotten it all was. Rupert wielding fleshy weapons, Evelyn Warner cremating her secret disappointments at occasional forbidden fires. Neither caring.

That it was over now, whatever it had been, however long it had endured, she was quite certain.

CHAPTER XXIII

ANNE wrote cheerfully from Brittany, Janice adding her beloved little scrawl. From Wynne came two or three agitated letters. It was obvious that his sister's tragedy had moved him from his genial selfishness, his way of crawling into his mental cyclone cellar when tempests raged about other people. He became, as the year went on, philosophic. He even intimated that it was time he himself married and settled down—a consummation devoutly to be hoped, Anne commented in a later letter.

The following winter, toward the end of their first year in Washington, Jane had a very perilous attack of influenza followed by pneumonia. She caught the first cold, she afterwards averred, standing in the rain trying to make her way to the church in which Mary Young was triumphantly marrying her naval lieutenant. "But it was worth it," she told Rupert feebly, and did not add that the outraged face of Evelyn Warner, in the pew she and Barry eventually reached, had recompensed her for the ruin of a pair of shoes, a delightful hat, and the rest of the Washington season.

Rupert was seriously alarmed. Jane well and aloof and evasive was one thing; but Jane in a high fever,

her hands restless on the counterpane, her eyes glazed bright, was another. When she was convalescent he suggested to her that she "run over" for a few weeks to be with Anne in the spring. Perhaps Anne would meet her at Cannes or Nice? The sea voyage would do her more good than anything else.

Anne had a cable, Rupert had several in answer. The upshot was that Jane, together with the trained nurse, Miss Rollins, to whom she had become much attached, crawled aboard a train, and later up a gangplank and for a blessed week sat trancedly in the sun and watched the blue water slide by. "It's amazing," she confided to Amy Rollins, "the hold just *breathing* has on you! There was a time when I didn't regard breathing much. Then I couldn't breathe. Now, every painless breath I draw is a rite."

Rupert came to New York with them, saw them off on the boat. He filled the cabins full of lilacs and roses, fruit and new novels. He hovered anxiously and a little embarrassed until the warning blew. Jane was very thin, thinner than she ever had been. Her face was no longer round but spare, revealing the really fine modelling. She had little or no color and complained that rouge only made her look worse—a death's head.

"She'll be all right, Mr. Barry," Miss Rollins

assured him. "I can't imagine what has made her convalescence so slow. She has a marvellous constitution and tells me she had never been ill in her life—literally—until now. She made up for it though," added the pretty nurse, thoughtfully, remembering certain nights and days in which skill and care and science had seemed to play a losing game against lassitude and indifference and a stoic desire to be let alone on the part of her patient.

"Take care of her," said Rupert.

He took his wife in his arms, alone in her pleasant cabin, and kissed her.

"You've given us all a terrible fright," he announced, "now please remember that you have nothing in the world to do or to think about but getting well—and coming back to me."

She smiled, murmured something, returned his kiss absently. Presently he left her, stumbling over the great basket of growing roses with Evelyn Warner's card attached to them.

Rupert had some hours in New York before he must return to Washington. On an impulse, very alien indeed to his nature, he took a taxi to Washington Square, got out, paid the driver, and walked for a time around the little park, just budding green. He went, after a time, and stood before the first house in which he and Jane had lived.

On the train, going back to the City of Under-

currents, he thought consecutively, and for the first time, of all the years between his meeting with Jane and now. How had it happened — this *impasse* which they had reached?

First, his cautious falling in love. Next, his real ardor which was inevitably awakened by anything so sweet and as wholly his as the young Jane had been. Then the growing consciousness, during the latter part of his engagement, that lovable as she was, she was not the right wife to mate with his ambitions. His mind took him relentlessly through the Dolan-Lily years. Well, he had nothing to reproach himself for there, as far as Jane was concerned, he thought, frowning a little. A woman sitting opposite him regarded his engrossed face, the blond hair silvering at the temples, the well-dressed, attractive figure. She sighed. She knew Barry by sight. She thought of her own fat Congressman and sighed again.

No. If he had tricked Lily—all's fair in war, he mused. It hadn't been easy toward the end to play the rôle of the impatient lover. Not as easy as it would have been at the beginning, when it hadn't been at all necessary.

Evelyn Warner. She had helped him enormously. And he had experienced for her, too, briefly but recklessly, a certain genuine attachment of the senses. She was a very ardent woman, the more so because

her life, lived so much in public, had schooled her to evasion and caution and restraint. That she had cared for him, he much doubted. It had been an affair of necessity, he thought, on both sides.

That was over now. There wouldn't be any more. As far as he was concerned no woman need ever again have a finger in his political pie. He was very strongly entrenched; how strongly, no one as yet knew save the few Higher Up.

He had asked Jane to come back to him. Had she understood? Would she submit? What a curious life theirs had been. No explanations, no questions, just the blind drifting apart. He knew Jane—or thought he did—and had been able to find a reply to his own wonderings. Did she—know anything? Or was it merely that she had ceased to love him when the life he had made for her had proved so dissimilar to the life she had, perhaps, fancied would be hers?

When she came back they would have it out. He loved her. He had never loved another woman. He had felt for her during their married life a series of reactions; disappointment, a little scorn, a little tolerance, a vast deal of indifference. But always he had loved her, according to his lights.

His career was no longer precarious. It was established. He smiled, thinking of an interview with Dolan a year ago. A terrible one, with profanity

and reproaches and apoplectic accusations on the part of the old Irishman. From that interview Barry had come forth unscathed.

Into the discard with Dolan and his merry men, Lily and her long, green eyes, Evelyn and her penchant for "promise." He stood alone. And in a sense, physically, at all events, the situation was a lonely one.

Jane had been very charming all the past year. He realized with a little amazement that she fitted into the *milieu*. It was only with the Dolan circle she had been so awkward and, for his purposes, without much value. Whether or not she cared for the setting into which she was now thrown, he could not for the life of him tell, but at any rate she fitted. Among people of breeding she was at home. If she was not as clever as many of the Washington women—did it matter when she was so delightfully herself?

He began to think that it was, after all, restful to have a wife who never lifted a hand to disturb the swift and sometimes muddy waters of political change and event; restful to possess the most gracious hostess in the city—and one of the prettiest women. He had been wrong perhaps to expect from her the meddlesome, struggling understanding of the "political wife." Possibly by being herself she had and would help him more than if she had been him-

self—which is what he had tried to make of her.

Well, she'd come back and they would see.

He sent her a wireless on reaching Washington. When it reached her she smiled a little.

Shipboard days were heavenly. It was warm for early spring and not very rough. Jane was a good sailor and liked the few days that produced wind and a little, gray, soft fog; she liked the roll of the deck under her feet and was laughingly unsympathetic with Amy Rollins who, for all her cap and R.N., was reduced, tearfully, to the ministrations of the stewardess and the quite good-looking young ship's doctor.

"You can't tell me you're really sick," said Jane, severely. "This is just your hospital technique. Lacking a susceptible interne——"

"Go 'way!" said Miss Rollins to her merciless patient, "and do keep out of fogs and things. Oh, for heaven's sake, why did I ever leave Washington?"

There were children on board, with their bright little sweaters and high little voices and the clatter of small feet along the decks. Jane picked up several who had rolled into the scuppers, shook them, kissed them and gave them cookies. She walked a little, but for the most part sat, wrapped in rugs, with an unopened novel on her lap, watching the water and thinking with tenderness of her meeting with Anne. And Wynne, too. For he was to bring Anne and

Janice to Nice and stay with them there for a month.

Of Rupert she thought not at all or as little as possible. For she knew that when she went back it must be to effect some sort of compromise with him.

Anne met them at the end of their journey, tall Janice, at first a little shy, but chattering vividly in French as soon as she had recovered, hanging on her arm. Anne was really very lovely, and she had about her a shining serenity which Jane terribly envied and painfully loved. It was good to see Wynne again, handsome as ever, as ever nonchalant, but really emotionally moved to be with her.

Anne and Wynne had taken a sunny apartment. There was a room for Amy Rollins, now quite herself again and able to look upon the world—a world which included Wynne Marlowe—with a less jaundiced eye. A room for Jane, next to Amy's, for Jane must still be taken care of, must have her hot milk and her naps and be restrained from too much excitement—a room all rosy linens and charming old furniture, overlooking a bird-haunted garden.

They drove, they walked, they ventured to Monte Carlo; they looked upon the changing beauty of the coast and smelled the miles of flowers, enamelling their ways. Sometimes, much against Miss Rollins' orders, Jane gathered Wynne and Anne to her in her bedroom, while Miss Rollins sniffed loudly next door and knocked at intervals on the panelling, and

while Janice slept, and talked—and talked—and talked.

"The three Marlowes," said Wynne, with a boyish grin, "together once more—for, I should say, practically the first time."

He entertained them with tales "of his youth" as he put it, with stories of people and places and reactions. Anne spoke of Brittany and her garden and the growing beauty of her child. Jane said very little that mattered. A word about Washington, a mention of Mary Young, whom Anne had known, a little talk of Mrs. Barry. Her brother and sister listened and were, according to the depths of their individual understanding, enlightened.

It was for all of them an enchanting episode, an interval. It would end.

Wynne would go back to the Paris he could not leave for long; Anne would return to her cottage on the coast, her flowers, her heavy, peasant furniture and her life of waiting; Jane would go back to—Rupert?

He wrote frequently. Once he touched, very briefly, on the situation between them. That day Jane would not drive out; she sat at home in the garden, with her hands folded on the letter in her lap and her face, rounder and more rosy, grave and abstracted.

"I'm afraid I have disappointed you very much,

Jane. I should have told you more definitely just the sort of man you were marrying. I always knew, you see. And we have drifted very far apart. I have never questioned your attitude, your inalienable right to withdraw yourself from me. But it can't go on, my dear. When you come back we must talk it out. There must be some point on which we can meet and be as one. I have always loved you. I admit it has not seemed so; I have neglected you. I have not taken you into my confidence as I should have done. I—Oh, you were very young, Jane, and perhaps I was impatient to discover that young as you were you could not be moulded by me or any other man. I had not reckoned on as strong a Jane, you see!"

She did not answer that letter.

Instead Anne wrote and Miss Rollins assured him that Jane was rapidly recovering her old, radiant health.

Wynne, for all his good resolutions, was unable not to make himself attractive to the blond Amy. He turned her head a little. His own was turned a little. Anne and Jane sat back, amused, a little annoyed, but with their hands tied. And when Amy Rollins went back to America she carried with her a heart that she was sure was broken. Sometime later she married her "interne", now a grave young doctor with a beginning practice, and made him a

better wife than she would have done two years earlier because, through Wynne Marlowe, she had learned a little about another sort of suffering, much about beauty and something of dreams. All very innocent, rather idyllic and intensely instructive—for Amy.

“Wynne will *never* settle!” said Jane to Anne in despair. “Heaven knows he’s not a boy! He’ll be forty before he knows it.”

“His time will come,” said Anne placidly.

Before Jane left she shut herself up with Anne in the small drawing room, sent Wynne and Amy for a walk and told her sister what was in her heart. She mentioned no names; she touched, indeed, very vaguely on the more conventional shortcomings of her husband, and she did not ask advice. She ended:

“I have known for a long time what I must do. In a way I have shrunk from it. It seems—wrong. Children should be conceived as—forgive me, Anne—as your child was. In beauty, in complete understanding, in amazement. But——”

Anne looked at her, her eyes darkly blue.

“I told you you’d win through,” was all she said.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE passage home was almost unruffled. Even Amy had no legitimate excuse to keep to her cabin. Jane was amazingly well. She had seen a doctor, a friend of Wynne's, before she left—they had several very breathless days in Paris before sailing—and she was armed with his benevolent judgment on her case. She felt strong, she felt that she had now solved, to her own satisfaction, her problem.

On the ship, some days before they docked, the news reached them that John Warner had died of heart failure in Washington.

Jane sent a wireless to Evelyn. So much she must do for mere convention's sake. She found it in her heart to pity the woman a little. What would she do now, her instrument, her official instrument, was gone? Without Warner to back her she could not very well go on dabbling in the affairs of other men. It must be bitter for her, as if she had been deprived of an important sense, sight or touch.

That Warner's death would affect herself or Rupert she did not consider.

She had wirelessly Rupert that she would stop off in New York for a day or two, in order to see his mother. If he could join her there it would be

pleasant. If not, he could meet her in Washington.

Messages waited her at the Plaza that Rupert would not be able to come to New York. He telephoned her within a little time of her arrival, but his tone, and words, while welcoming, were non-committal. She seemed to discern a repressed agitation. He had, he told her, briefly, attended Warner's funeral. The Department was considerably upset. He could not leave.

Jane thought, hanging up the receiver:

"He'll step into that dead man's boots."

She was sure of it. In some obscure way it appeared to her at once inevitable and indecent.

Leaving Amy in New York to shop and see friends, Jane went out to Mrs. Barry's. She found her much as ever, eager for news of Anne, distressed at Jane's account of her illness—Amy had written carefully during the most perilous time—and rejoiced to see this daughter of her heart looking so fully recovered.

"It agreed with you. You were never handsomer."

"Illness is salutary—sometimes," said Jane, smiling. "I know mine was."

She sat a minute in silence, her thoughts turning back to the days when she had nearly died, the nights that seemed dark thresholds to The Unknown House.

Of what she had thought then—had it been thought at all?—she could tell no living soul, not

even Anne, save, perhaps, Rupert, when the time came.

At the end of her second day with her mother-in-law a wire reached her.

"Am in town, must see you before you return to Washington."

It was signed "Evelyn Warner."

Jane replied to her at the address of the small hotel which was appended to the telegram. She went back to town next morning with a curious feeling that destiny was rushing her. She had little or no trepidation.

Telling Amy that she would be occupied that afternoon, Jane gave her *matinée* tickets and waited, not impatiently, Evelyn's arrival.

Mrs. Warner came. She wore a *crêpe* veil, heavy, black, unseasonable and unbecoming. Her face was amazing. It was a feverish face with restless, almost insane eyes and her body seemed gross in the dark garments which weighted it.

"I had to see you."

"Please sit down."

Mrs. Warner sat on the extreme edge of a chair. Her veil was flung back. She looked at Jane with burning, greedy eyes.

"You're very handsome——"

There seemed nothing to reply to that. Jane stifled an hysterical desire to laugh. Should she say "Thank

you", demurely, or deny the allegation? She could almost hear herself murmuring with an absurd deprecation, "Oh, not at all!"

Evelyn Warner regarded her for a moment, fixedly. She then said:

"Rupert doesn't know I've come. I saw him—yesterday. He—I told him I would have to see you. He didn't believe me."

After a moment, in which Jane said nothing, the other woman began again. She talked hastily, in an almost garbled fashion. She seemed to have completely lost the smooth, enunciated diction for which she was noted. Her usually subdued, almost mechanical voice was harsh.

Jane thought, fleetingly, of Lily Lawrence.

"Do you know how John Warner died? Have you guessed? In a woman's apartment—a common woman. It was hushed up, of course. The Department saw to that. Rupert!"

"I knew he'd go that way," his widow added, after a minute.

She put out her hands toward Jane, a little stiffly. They were beautiful hands, for all their restlessness.

"Do you know what his disgusting death has done to me? I'll have to go off somewhere—crawl in some hole—take up woman's suffrage—work for some club or civic thing or other. That's all I'm good for.

"My life's finished, I tell you. That man—that creature I lived with all these years—empty, faithless, stupid. I made him! He was my mouthpiece. I had power—through him. And through others. That's all I've lived for, I tell you.

"Gone, now!

"You couldn't understand. You haven't anything but a lovely body and a lovely face. You haven't—oh, it doesn't matter. Why in God's name did Rupert Barry ever marry you? He's too clever to be caught in so obvious a trap. You'd have been happier with John. John hated Washington. He wanted to be back in Ohio with his feet on a desk, and the men coming in afternoons with the sporting editions and the latest story. He liked to take the children out to the parks—fool!

"If I had had a husband like Rupert Barry there are no heights we might not have reached."

Jane spoke for the first time.

"What are you trying to tell me, Mrs. Warner? Please—be less hysterical."

But the other woman seemed not to have heard her.

"Look here! You're young, you're beautiful. Men must be mad about you. You haven't been happy—living as you do. Don't you suppose I know? I'll give you your chance. Go back—abroad. Divorce Rupert there."

Jane asked:

"Why?"

"I tell you," said the other woman roughly, "you're not the wife for him. I am."

Jane looked at her a moment. She asked, thoughtfully:

"You love him then?"

Into Evelyn Warner's eyes came a curious, sly look. She asked, tentatively:

"And if I say that I do——?"

"I wouldn't believe you," said Jane Barry.

"I suppose not. However, love or not, I tell you he'll not amount to anything with you."

"I'm to give him up for his career? A divorced man? What sort of a career would he have then?"

"He's strong enough to overcome that. I am strong enough." Mrs. Warner mentioned one or two names, "It hasn't hurt them, has it? Or not for long."

Wearily Jane protested.

"In mercy to you, I can only think you are deranged. This is too ridiculous. What possible ground can you have for thinking that my husband and I——"

But the other woman broke in:

"Don't spar for time. I tell you I was his mistress. Do you understand that? Will you believe that? His *mistress!*"

"I knew," said Jane.

The fever in Evelyn Warner's eyes died. They looked dull, opaque. Her face paled perceptibly. She sat looking at Jane and her lips moved slowly. She whispered:

"You—knew?"

"Yes. You answered a telephone once, Mrs. Warner. It was reckless of you. I cannot imagine why you have told me this. You must realize that it puts a weapon in my hand. If I were to divorce my husband, naming you—where's your career then?"

The door opened abruptly. Rupert Barry walked in. He had the dishevelled look of a man whose thoughts have caused much anxiety.

"Jane!"

His eyes swept the other woman, her pallor, her tensivity. A strangled sound came from him.

"I—followed as soon as I had guessed. What has she been telling you?"

"Nothing I didn't know."

He turned on Evelyn Warner. His face was suddenly brutal.

"I warned you when you sent for me. You chose to ignore my warning. Get out of my wife's room."

"Wait a minute. Mrs. Warner has intimated that you wish me to divorce you in order to marry her, is this so?"

"It is not!"

Evelyn got to her feet. She had played and failed. On the day her husband died she had sent for Rupert Barry on the excuse that she needed official advice. She had informed him that the way was now clear for their eventual marriage. She had become a panic-stricken creature, pitiable and ugly, when she saw the reins slip from her, the reins the disgracefully dead had held. She had turned to her lover—if so brief an episode could have been dignified by that term—and had pronounced her ultimatum. If he didn't find a "decent" way out of it all, she would go to Jane and tell her.

He had left after a few trenchant words. Now she had made good her threat.

She gasped a little.

"I—I'll spread the thing broadcast."

Rupert returned quietly:

"Oh, no you won't. You can only injure yourself with those weapons. You forget how much I know."

Jane never asked an explanation of that. She remarked, merely:

"You can do no harm, Mrs. Warner, if I too broadcast, as you put it, the entire confidence and unity existing between me and my husband. I will discount your story as that of a grief-demented woman."

Rupert turned on her for a second look of gratitude. But his eyes were hard. He went over to Evelyn Warner and made a gesture as if he would have touched her on the shoulder. But he did not. He said, merely:

"Please go."

When the door had closed behind her, he flung himself into a chair. After a moment he lighted a cigarette and looked across the room at Jane. She was still standing over by the painted desk, the tips of her fingers resting lightly on it.

"Where's Amy?" he asked.

"At the theatre. We'll not be interrupted."

"I see. Will you go back to Washington with me tonight? It's a foregone conclusion that I'm to have," he hesitated and then went on without any change of expression, "John Warner's post."

"I supposed so."

"Will you come with me?"

She sat down facing him, almost knee to knee.

"That depends, Rupert. Suppose you tell me exactly how you feel. Tell me how this all happened, what led up to that woman coming here—that insane woman—and tell me too, quite frankly, how you feel toward me.

"When I was so ill, Rupert, I seemed to get a little away from myself—to look, for a moment, into the workings of the machine, to see the wheels go

around and to realize, dimly, that we don't matter. None of us. Our individual passions. What we stand for matters, and where, at the end, we have reached. Routes mean nothing. The scales do not balance as we think. Neither for good nor evil. I knew myself, then. Tell me what you know of yourself. Where are you going? And to what purpose, Rupert?"

CHAPTER XXV

AFTER a moment he began heavily.

"It's impossible, I think, to make you understand. Once before I tried to tell you something of my ambitions. God! They ride me with spurs. Even now—more than ever now, when for half a moment my whole career trembled in the balance. I tried then to make you see how I was willing to go to any lengths to secure my position, my ultimate advantage; how I was determined to make that advantage count for the common good. That was the reason for Dolan."

"And Lily?"

He looked at her a moment. She said, in answer to an unspoken question:

"I saw Lily, after your break. She told me how you had come by those letters. That was, somehow, almost worse than this."

He had paled. His eyes wavered from hers a moment and then returned.

"It had to be done," he said; "that was the only way in which I could do it."

"She loved you—at the end."

"Oh, love—" he shrugged it off. In that moment she realized, fully as never before, how little love

counted with him. How—— Or was it just that the thing which masqueraded under the name did not count?

“And this—episode?”

“It was the only way—after exhausting all the other possibilities. At first it was—nothing at all. Just flattery. Afterward the woman attracted me.”

She held her breath. Would he say, “I was very lonely . . . ?” Would he cast the onus on her?

He did not. He went on steadily.

“Attracted me, physically. There’s something secret and perverse about her. Something cruel. Ruthless. A more ambitious creature than myself. The affair was of no duration, Jane.”

He paused and then went on.

“I’ve only loved you. As much as I could. I don’t suppose it is in me to love—beautifully. Not as a woman wishes to be loved. It’s there, but it’s secondary. I’m sorry, my dear.”

“You needn’t be.”

He lighted another cigarette. She realized that he was very nervous under his almost cold control.

“Well, there it is. I tell you, back in my brain I wanted all the laurels for you, too. I had married Richard Marlowe’s daughter. I was nobody. You never knew how much that hurt me, how much it—in a measure—impressed me. I was proud of it—painfully so. I swore that I’d give you a position

as great as those your ancestors had held. I don't suppose you'll believe that."

She nodded.

"Yes. That would be like you. I'm sorry you didn't tell me this ten years ago."

"Would you have understood ten years ago? I tell you there was nothing sentimental about it."

He paused again. Not in hesitation. She could almost see his thoughts struggle back of the broad forehead. He was coming as clean as he could.

"I had perhaps thought you a different type when I married you. A little more like myself. Anxious for me to get on. Careless of the method—you impressed me, aside from your beauty, as a woman of keen perception. You were not that, Jane. Not then."

"I know. That was Anne. I was Anne's parrot. Don't you suppose I was tortured to death, before we were married—and after—wondering when you would find me out?"

"Were you?" He seemed briefly, almost conventionally interested. He went on.

"When I found I'd have to go it alone, it didn't make any difference. In a way I was glad of it. Later, much gladder. Later, I thanked God I hadn't had to use you—hadn't *been able to* use you."

She understood that.

"And what sort of a life do you suppose I led?"

He looked at her, for the first time, with humility.
"God knows."

"I nearly divorced you—for Roger Weston," she told him. "I thought that Roger could give me what you hadn't been able to—hadn't wanted to give me. Peace for one thing. But I couldn't do it. I was your wife. I couldn't seem to get away from that."

Barry said nothing. After a moment Jane went on.

"It was from the first a hideous mistake. Do you know the sort of woman I am? I'll tell you, in case you don't."

She laughed a little, softly, not bitterly, but as if the whole jig-saw puzzle of the thing amused her. There were so many missing pieces and it might have been so charming a pattern, a picture.

"I'm a country club woman, Rupert. The kind of woman who adores a big house and a big hearth, who wants her friends to drop in for bridge, who takes thought for her husband's comfort, who wants to run up to town now and then and lunch with him. A very usual woman, Rupert. A woman who wants her children. A houseful of them. Have you ever considered what you condemned me to when you refused to let me have children?"

Very low he answered:

"Never. I—I knew you wanted a child. I thought you had gotten over it. I thought that

girls, marrying young, often felt that way. A sort of sentimentality, perhaps. It seemed to me wiser not—I had my way to make. I hoped you would make it with me. Children would have hampered you. We had to carve it out of very meagre material, you must realize. All our energies were to be bent to that—I imagined.”

“I never got over it. You said just now that love—love for a woman—was secondary, must always be secondary to your ambitions. I tell you that with my kind of woman, love for a man must always be secondary to love for the child. I fancied I adored you. I did, perhaps; it was a manifestation—a symptom, merely. I thought I loved you for yourself. I did not. I loved you for my children’s sake. You were a means to an end, that was all.”

For a moment they stared at each other across the chasm their differing desires had dugged. She went on, presently.

“I was born to a career also. You have cheated me of that career. And there are no compensations. Anne told me, long ago, that there were none. Have you considered Anne, ever? *Her* career cut short. For Anne is not for her child. She was for Paul. Lover, always. And Paul is dead. There’s another career smashed. Two of them—Anne’s and mine.”

“Three, perhaps,” he told her, with a sudden odd resignation, and added, “There’s nothing I can say.”

"Nothing," she agreed, evenly. "I must ask you one thing. Are you willing to give up your ambitions for me? There is other work you can do. You can go back to the law. Are you willing to leave this dishonesty, this roughshod overriding of everything I have been taught to consider right and sane and honorable. Answer me truthfully, Rupert."

He answered her, without any attempt at excuse, without even a tremor of his voice.

"No."

"Neither am I willing to sacrifice longer."

"Then there's no way?"

"Yes, if you'll take it."

She rose now and, almost mechanically, he came to his feet with her. She seemed very tall, suddenly. Almost as tall as he. They almost looked eye to eye.

"I'll go back to Washington with you on one condition. I will run your house, entertain your guests, further your plans as far as lies within my power to do so, on one condition. I will close my eyes to any outside influence that you consider necessary, on one condition. I do not for a moment think that you will be unfaithful to me again, in the accepted sense of the word. I—I have a little pride myself, Rupert. And I'm older than Jane Marlowe was when she took her vows and listened to yours. But I know that from time to time you will meet

a woman whose mind is *en rapport* with yours, who can stimulate you, spur you, who can go with you where I cannot follow. I know this. There would be no use in denying it to myself. And I am willing for you to have your—occasional Egerias—on one condition.”

“And that is?”

“I must have my children, Rupert. I must make my own home. I must make my own career—separate from yours—*their* career.”

He was very still. She said, smiling dimly:

“It is a compromise. Makeshift, I suppose. But the best we can do.”

He put out his hands and pulled her to him. He drew her near to him, his hands still on her shoulders.

“You’ll have wonderful children, Jane.”

After a moment he spoke again.

“And—you no longer love me?”

Her eyes looked into his but they did not see him. They were following a long road. Anne had said no compensations. She, Jane, had said it. But were there not—even in compromise? Her heart was far from him, as light as a feather. Perhaps at the end his road and hers might cross. Perhaps at the end— She came back to him with a start.

Always they must be secondary in each other’s

regard. Need that be so devastating a knowledge? There were not many Annes, not many Paul Abadies. And perhaps people who loved each other to the exclusion of all else—the world forgotten—could not dare to be as honest. Was not honesty a good foundation on which to build? She smiled again, still standing a little away from him, although his hands were on her. She asked, pityingly:

“Should I not love—the father of my sons?”

THE END

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